

# Dateline Mujibnagar

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## Abbreviations

CSP	Civil Service of Pakistan
IAS	Indian Administrative Service
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPP	Communist Party of Pakistan
DAC	Democratic Action Committee
EPR	East Pakistan Rifles
EPSL	East Pakistan Students' League
EPSU	East Pakistan Students' Union
NAP	National Awami Party
MI	Military Intelligence
NDF	National Democratic Front
BSF	Border Security Force
SAC	Students' Action Committee
SDO	Sub-Divisional Officer
DM	District Magistrate
C-in-C	Commander-in-Chief
MB	Mukti Bahini
EBR	East Bengal Regiment
HQ	Headquarters
BGS	Brigadier General Staff
CAS	Chief of Army Staff
IAF	Indian Air Force
PAF	Pakistan Air Force
LC	Lines of Communication
AIR	All India Radio
RP	Radio Pakistan
EPAL	East Pakistan Awami League



During the course of covering this upheaval as a journalist, I have interviewed hundreds of people in Bangladesh—before liberation and after. They included Awami League leaders, Maulana Bhasani, Muzaffar Ahmed, Moni Singh and a host of others, lawyers, officers of the Civil Service of Pakistan, IAS officers, many friends and some commanders of the *Mukti Bahini*, not to mention the student leaders and other prominent Bangladesh citizens. It is not possible to name the friends; besides, many of them preferred to remain anonymous. But I am grateful to all of them for their unselfish cooperation.

The name *Dateline Mujibnagar* was suggested by a friend and the book developed not around Mujibnagar but from it; surrounding the characters and figures who created Mujibnagar and lived with it throughout the stages of the undercover war. This is not a book of history but wherever necessary, political analysis and interpretation drew sustenance from history. The relevant historical information was compiled from the day the Muslim League was born and, where necessary, from the time the two-nation theory was in an embryonic state in the minds of the British rulers. The book, thus, deals with the undercover war and India's involvement; the real war, the genesis of the militarism in Pakistan, militarism *vis-a-vis* the theocratic concept of State, Pakistan's strategy, international involvements and the emerging forces in Bangladesh. The future of Indo-Bangladesh relations and Pakistan's attitude towards Bangladesh have been dealt with adequately—but with caution, in view of the fluidity of the situation.

When Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was released from prison, Bangladesh assumed a new dimension through the alignment of new forces. The Sheikh's enigmatic personality made it all the more interesting and absorbing. To call a "period" became almost impossible; new developments had to be recorded, sifted and interpreted for inclusion in the book. Then came the summit meeting between Mrs Gandhi and Mr Zulfikar Ali Bhutto at Simla, not an end to the impasse but possibly the beginning to an end, and a lasting peace at long last.

The analysis is subjective and the forecasts made are naturally based on the emergent forces and the events that came to my notice. So the tone of the book is not as-I-told-you but as-I-

saw-it. With new developments taking place every day in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, it really was difficult to stop. The line had to be drawn somewhere and the best was, perhaps, at the Simla Summit from where the view might be more clear. When the book was ready by the end of June, both India and Pakistan were groping for a formula which might be the key to a permanent solution. It proved easier to talk about it than find it. The POWs, Kashmir and a no-war pact were the moorings round which both the parties were circling as if in a merry-go-round. Before it ended in failure a last-minute after-dinner overture saved the situation and an agreement was reached. Though only a beginning, the implications of the agreement are far-reaching.

Along with expressing my gratitude for my wife, I would specially like to thank Miss Lakshmi Maitra, Mallika, Srijeeb and my friend Gour Mitra for the secretarial help they ungrudgingly gave me. I am also grateful to two other friends who went through the manuscript meticulously. I am equally indebted to Professor Dilip Kumar Sanyal, formerly of the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, for going through the manuscript and editing it.

ARUN BHATTACHARJEE

# Contents

ONE	The Two Strangers——1
TWO	The Curtain Raised——43
THREE	Militarism and Muslim Politics——
FOUR	Islam and Inequality——89
FIVE	Resurrected from the Coffin——107
SIX	On the Guerrilla Trail——121
SEVEN	The Panther Strikes——138
EIGHT	They Fought in the East for the West——179
NINE	Whither Bangladesh——193
	APPENDICES——222
	BIBLIOGRAPHY——249
	INDEX——251

## CHAPTER ONE

### The Two Strangers

The two strangers peered at the figure extending his hand in the gloomy lantern light under a tree. They could not see the face clearly but the voice was pleasant; the welcome friendly. The host, a senior officer of the Indian Border Security Force, greeted them on Indian soil. The strangers had left East Pakistan behind.

The older of the two hesitated before he clasped the firm hand and returned the greeting. The younger one behind him shook the extended hand more warmly, holding it in both hands and giving it a friendly squeeze. Another officer of the BSF, who had brought the two strangers from across the border, suggested that all of them retire to the Tungi border outpost, silhouetted against the sky in the faint moonlight.

The date was 30 March 1971. The place, Nadia-Kushtia border. Just five days before, the leaders of East Pakistan had been on top of the world. They had won a thumping victory in the elections both in the National Assembly and the Provincial Assembly. General Yahya Khan had either genuinely desired to hand over power to a democratically elected government or had miscalculated the Awami League's popularity. Anyhow, elections were over, and the Awami League was in a commanding position not only in East Pakistan but in Pakistan as a whole, having captured 167 seats which gave them a majority in the National Assembly. Nothing could fail them. They were the future leaders of Pakistan. As Maulana Bhasani, the 90-year old veteran leader of the National Awami Party remarked

[illegible]

troops, much less an Army on the rampage. Yet the conciliatory behaviour of Yahya and the defensive, almost subservient, attitude of the Pakistan Army during the post-election period had convinced the Awami leaders that the armed forces were no match for their solid unity. When the Sheikh said on 7 March 1971, "Build a fort in every household," they thought that each household was a bastion of invincible strength. When the Sheikh said: "You [troops] go back to the barracks," people had seen with amazement that they had actually done so. When the Sheikh told them to "get ready with whatever weapons you have," the people responded with patriotic fervour and brought out their *lathis*, spears and some even their single barrellled shotguns, barely lethal for doves. The Sheikh's word was law. Nobody could defy him, not even the troops. As Anthony Mascarenhas said: "Never before armed soldiers were humiliated so much. People laughed at them, jeered at them—so when the troops struck, it was with a vengeance not only to pay back for all the insults of the past, but also to see that the Bengalis never rose again."

The two strangers had escaped from Dacca with the blessings of the leader and with his mandate to carry on the struggle from the interior. The last five days of the perilous journey had sown seeds of doubt in their minds. They had found enough enthusiasm but much more gossip. They had heard enough talk but seen very little action and they had seen much ruthlessness which could not be matched by anything in their arsenal.

What was Sheikh Mujib's intention? History will perhaps speculate idly unless the Sheikh himself records what was in his mind on March 25.

I have talked to many who had met him at that final hour of East Pakistan's destiny. Till March 25, complete independence was mere rhetoric with most, except perhaps with the younger generation. The post-partition generation had known only one enemy—the West Pakistanis or as they called them, non-Bengalis. For, besides the West Pakistanis, there were about two million Biharis—mostly migrants from India after 1947. But the older generation had another enemy in mind—India. They had passed through the bitter communal days of the 1940s when Muslim nationalism had sought a panacea in its demand for Pakistan,

a homeland for Muslims. There was, of course, another interpretation of the Lahore Resolution on Pakistan—one which envisaged the creation of two autonomous States in the two wings. But in the euphoria of partition, such “minor points” were forgotten and all had gathered under one banner, in one State. This pre-partition generation had suffered psychologically if not physically at the hands of the Hindus who were dominating in all fields—political, economic, and cultural. Competition was unequal and the Muslims wanted a homeland of their own where they could develop themselves according to their cultural bias, unfettered by Hindu domination. Any Muslim who differed from this view was quickly branded “traitor” and “Hindu stooge.” Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and others belonged to this category. Even Muslims of UP and Bihar who had most to lose in the creation of Pakistan were ardent supporters of partition. In undivided Bengal, the cry of Pakistan among Muslims was almost universal and understandably so. The Muslims of Bengal had nothing to lose and a State to gain if Pakistan came into existence. Any Muslim who had taken part in Indian politics in the pre-partition days had, in almost all cases, espoused the Muslim League cause. Having been instrumental in founding Pakistan, they could not disown their responsibilities as founding fathers. Most of the pre-partition Muslim politicians, including Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, were directly or indirectly responsible for the creation of Pakistan. Now a stage had arrived when they had to acknowledge their “mistake” for they had no longer a place in Pakistan, excepting on terms laid down by the rulers of West Pakistan. And at this moment of agonising reappraisal, they had to shake themselves free from Pakistan—the Frankenstein of their own making.

We shall discuss elsewhere why the younger generation was more firmly wedded to the concept of independent Bangladesh and why the older generation was somewhat sceptical. We had heard of pious intentions of keeping Bengal undivided, “free and sovereign” from people like Suhrawardy, Fazlul Huq and Bhasani. This concept of undivided sovereign Bengal found favour with Muslim leaders only when the partition of Bengal was becoming a reality. Before that, no responsible Muslim leader had thought of a Pakistan in each wing as envisaged in

the Lahore Resolution. The concerted demand had been for an Islamic State of Pakistan, a homeland for all Muslims. So, at that point of history, on the night of March 25, the leaders had to, as Tajuddin Ahmed said in another context "bury Pakistan" and declare independence.

Some of his lieutenants said that they had been told by the Sheikh to fan out in the interior or at least go into hiding. As for himself, he would stay where he was and face the military junta of Pakistan, and he did. At the same time, I have it on the authority of a very reliable source that the Sheikh had "packed up" and was about to leave when the Pakistan Army arrived. He had just time to pick up his pipe. Anyway, none of the leaders had received specific instructions from him to cross over to India.

In later days, much would be heard from bitter Bangladesh politicians how India had let them down, how they themselves had kept the Indian Deputy High Commission informed, how they had provided a "shopping list" and how in their hour of crisis, nothing happened. The truth was what Bhasani told me—in anticipation of becoming Ministers, they had tailored their sherwanis. They had not anticipated a breakdown of talks, much less a military crackdown.

Tajuddin Ahmed's Press statement on April 17 is quite clear on that point, highlighting the Pak perfidy and treachery. If the Indian Deputy High Commissioner had indeed been kept informed, he had not passed on any specific request and had not even taken any step for the protection and safety of his staff. I interviewed several officers of the Deputy High Commission all of whom said that falling in with the general mood of the country, they were also sharing the mass euphoria and, in fact, some of them were enjoying a game of cards when the first shots were fired by the Pak Army at the EPR headquarters. None had sent his family away and none made any effort to make any preparation for Indian participation in the liberation movement. As a matter of fact, even the leaders of Bangladesh had not made any preparation for a war of liberation because no war was expected by them. They had made hardly any contact with the Bengali dominated armed wings like EBR, EPR or the Police. And in all fairness to them, they had enough sagacity not to



want an India-inspired revolution. The leadership of the Bengalis might have had grave drawbacks but they were not anybody's henchmen or stooges.

The failure of the Agartala Conspiracy case in 1968 proved that. It is inconceivable that the "conspiracy" so elaborately got up by the Pakistan regime would be allowed to be demolished so easily; the fact was that there was not enough evidence to convince anybody, not even a Pakistani judge.

To go back to the journey of the two strangers: They had crossed the Buriganga river at Dacca and managed to reach Jibannagar in Kushtia, tired, elated and not a little frightened. The task of conducting a war was too big for them and they knew that nothing short of war would dislodge the occupation Pakistan Army.

They were elated because in Kushtia, the news was not too depressing owing to a number of developments. For some reason, the Pakistan Army company there had been split up and stationed at places like the telephone exchange, Circuit House and the Court House. The Bengalis had surrounded them and flushed them out. In a bid to move from one point to another to join forces, two of the platoons had indulged in the misadventure of stirring out of their shelters and in the process had been liquidated. They belonged to a Baluch regiment. Some of them were captured and kept in jail. Some were killed.

I heard an interesting account from one of them, a young Lieutenant named Ataullah Shah, who had sustained a fractured skull. He said: "All along I was in sympathy with the Bengalis. My friends were Bengalis and I was received in Bengali homes. We Pathans and Bengalis get along fine. In fact, my Punjabi colleagues used to taunt me and shun my company. This suited me because I could make friends with the Bengalis.... I do not say I did not carry out orders but I would rather chase a group of suspects than kill them. Once I was ordered to kill two Bengali 'intruders' who were seen near our headquarters. I accosted them and asked them to run away and reported to my CO that they had escaped. When this thing erupted, we tried to make contact with the platoon at the telephone exchange and realised only too late that we had been surrounded by a screaming mob.... They practically pounced on us. I began to get blows

on my head but before I lost consciousness I was aware of two persons trying to protect me from the murderous mob....I have a feeling that they were those two whom I had shooed away."

So Kushtia was liberated in the sense that the small Pakistan Army unit there was forced to a defeat or withdrawal. In other districts, the term "liberated" was used in a loose sense when the Pakistan Army units chose not to come out.

The SDO of Meherpur, Choudhury, was a young man of about 30 and the SDPO of Jhenida, Mehboob, even younger. Major Osman Choudhury of the EPR had miraculously escaped capture when he was getting back to the Circuit House on March 25. As he told me later: "God saved me." The SDO confirmed that only a short while before, he had arranged to blow off a bridge which prevented the onward movement of the Pakistan Army towards Kushtia.

The two strangers had found excitement running high and sober thoughts creeping behind. It was being increasingly realised that the EPR and the police were no match for the Pakistan Army if it came in force, and the arms and ammunition with them sufficed only for scare-value or noisy interruption, neither of which would really stop the regular army's march. Rumour was afloat of imaginary movements of "brigades of Pak Army," coupled with heroic exploits of the Bengalis. "To talk to them at that moment," said a sober man, "one would think that freedom had been won one moment and lost in the next. There was complete confusion, too much talk and very little action. And on top of everything, there was fear...." It was this fear which goaded many to look towards the west—towards India.

The SDO took it upon himself to write a note to the BSF Battalion Commandant at Krishnagar: "Give us arms." It was presumed that arms would arrive for the asking and India could hardly refuse a legitimate request like that. It was assumed that after 24 years of active hostility, the moment one party shouted "help," the other party would immediately rush forward in response. That India could have a different policy, that India could even hesitate, never crossed their minds. I have it on the authority of some eminent Awami League leaders of Kushtia that a senior officer of the BSF had visited them—at their

invitation—and put some sober thoughts to cool their boiling ardour.

To the verbal heroics of the warriors, and their expectation of help, he made a pertinent point: The people of Bangladesh seem to have taken a big decision. India did not ask them to do so. His own sense of discipline taught him to respect authority. If somebody else is defying authority, he must have very good reason to do so. "If you are disloyal to your government, don't expect me to be disloyal to ours. I can do only what my government wants me to do—whatever you have to tell me, you should tell my government." The cool logic of this Indian officer had a mixed reception. While some shouted "betrayal" others could understand the logic behind the Indian officer's attitude. He was honourably escorted back to the Krishnagar border from where he had been brought in "for consultations." He was told that they would get in touch with him later.

Grave consultations followed this meeting when the two strangers arrived. Their feelings oscillated between hope and despair. The first round had gone in favour of the Bengalis in Kushtia but the second round might be difficult unless India helped. It was on March 27 that the BSF officer was contacted again and certain assurances sought from him. He refused to give any, except that if they wanted a discussion, it could be arranged. "India has no enmity with Pakistan," he bluntly told them. If, however, some people were being oppressed and needed shelter and help, India, herself a democratic country, would like to help them. The extent and mode of this help were matters of policy. It was then that he was told that some leaders of Bangladesh had arrived and they would like to have a discussion with the Government of India. The meeting took place in the border outpost on 30 March 1971. The two officers of the Border Security Force whom they met were Bengalis.

The senior leader said that they wanted help but without embarrassing India. The BSF officers said that they could not speak for the Government of India but a contact at the highest level in India could be arranged if they so desired. The two Bangladesh leaders looked uncomfortable. It was obvious that they were not sure of the correct step. Both of them were utter strangers to India and had not been there even in the

pre-partition days. The younger one was a child when partition came and the older one was a native of Dacca. Neither had contacts in India and each was hesitant; they were unsure whether to trust the BSF or for that matter India. Were they setting foot in a trap? Were they jumping out of the frying pan into fire? What would Mujib say? What would the people of Bangladesh say? There were many unanswered questions which the two BSF officers frankly refused to answer pleading either inability or ignorance.

The politeness of the BSF officers seemed to help them to make up their minds; it was arranged that they would go to Calcutta with the BSF officers for further discussions and return later to meet Major Osman Choudhury and other officers of the Kushtia administration. They made up their minds to meet the "highest source" in India. They knew that from then on destiny had charted their course and they had to look to India if they wanted to survive as individuals and as a nation.

The two arrived at a well-guarded guest house at about midnight to be received by the seniormost officer of the BSF. The older one of the two strangers was identified as Mohammed Ali and the younger one as Rahmat Ali. Next morning, the two scanned newspaper headlines while breakfasting in borrowed, ill-fitting clothes.

The newspapers were full of accounts of Bengalis up in revolt but there was an undercurrent of fear and uncertainty. It was as if they were in a hijacked aeroplane and nobody knew what the next moment would bring. Where was Mujib? Where were others? Local leaders had come out in the open with local inspirations. Getting control over the Chittagong Radio Station, Major Ziaur Rahman had announced a "provisional" government. Ashabul Haq of Kushtia had been photographed with dishevelled hair and a rifle slung over his shoulders, asking for arms aid from India. To believe the Press reports, the Pakistan Army was on the run everywhere and dared not stir out of barracks. If they ventured out they would be torn to pieces by screaming Bengalis—rifles, machineguns and artillery pieces notwithstanding. It was the best of times if one believed these reports; it was the worst of them, if one took a pragmatic view. There is nothing more dangerous than underestimating the

strength of the enemy. Even at that point of crisis, the leaders were thinking of fighting the Pakistan Army of occupation with their bare fists, *lathis*, some shotguns and some rifles.

Ashabul Haq told me that he had received a mysterious call on March 31, from somebody who claimed to be "No. 2" and was obviously speaking from Calcutta over the telephone (incidentally the Calcutta-Kushtia line was the only link till about 20 April 1972) urging him "not to seek arms at least not publicly" from India. The man pretended to be Tajuddin Ahmed. Knowing the local situation better, Ashabul Haq decided to ignore the call and went on publicly asking for India's help.

For the partisans it was a battle of wits as much as one of guns. They not only took help from friendly sources but tried to get friends involved so that they could not go back on their promises. Similarly, friends also tried not only to help but also to get the victims involved so that later, they could not denounce the helpers. This battle of wits was already on with people like Ashabul Haq making open appeals for Indian arms and India harping on its own neutrality but protesting "friendship" for the Bengali nationalists to get some positive commitment from them. It was not only the problem of giving but giving with a purpose to a party which would share India's ideals. India had to be sure that she was helping the right people. The Indian response would have been different if, for example, the Jamat-i-Islami wanted help to overthrow the military rule.

For a long, long time, we were to hear that India had sent truckloads of arms to East Pakistan in the name of "relief articles" for the cyclone victims. Nobody paused to consider that the truckloads of relief articles were delivered to the Pakistani authorities represented or trusted by the military rulers who would have been only too happy to receive such "arms aid" from India and that too without strings. We were to hear that thousands of unmarked rifles had been manufactured at the Cossipore gun factory for being given to Awami Leaguers. These rumours are easy to demolish. The Bangladesh revolutionaries never anticipated the need for arms on such a scale, they had no machinery or channel to receive them and in any case India had no situation report that such aid would be required at any time. Though in later days Indian troops and Bangladesh

freedom fighters were to march shoulder to shoulder, it should be remembered that even at this point of the crisis, there was no mutual understanding, much less appreciation of the need for foreign help. The Bangladesh leaders had allowed the events to drift and India had failed even to take proper note. How else can one explain why several Bangladesh people were arrested in the last week of March for attempting to cross over to India? Or that some were pushed back?

The most important development of March 31 was the issuing of two Press handouts on behalf of the "People's Republic of Bangladesh." Newspaper offices were alerted by an officer of the Border Security Force that he had two important releases to make and would they assemble at a particular place at 12 noon? Two handouts were read out. The officer explained that these had been made available to his organisation "from across the border" and the Press was free to accept or reject its contents; at least his organisation could not accept any responsibility for them; it was only a "friendly service" he was rendering to his Press friends and would they mind, not quoting him?

The Press did not mind. Here at last they were getting some "authoritative" statements and that too, sitting at Calcutta. Reports of war managed to trickle in; what was lacking was news of political significance from political leaders. The BSF was bridging the news-gap.

Throughout the Bangladesh crisis, the BSF came to bridge many such gaps, confirming the excellent rapport established by it with the Bangladesh liberation forces. The BSF, as originally conceived, was supposed to patrol the Indo-Pakistan border to prevent smuggling and other border crimes. But within five years of its existence, it had blossomed into a dynamic organisation which helped in shaping the course of history. It performed military, political, administrative and public relations duties along with some roles not envisaged for it at any time before. The first of the two handouts was the most significant. It said in effect that the People's Republic of Bangladesh had nominated Tajuddin Ahmed as the coordinator of the liberation movement. This was the first time that Ahmed's name came into prominence on this side of the border and from then on, in the absence of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, it was he who directed

the movement, conducted difficult negotiations and brought some cohesion to the political leadership.

This was not an easy task for him. He was not well-known outside his country and even within, he was not accepted as the Sheikh's second-in-command. Even within his party, for example, there were some who were "more equal" than him in status. Perhaps in declaring himself as a coordinator, Ahmed had deliberately taken the first step to assert his authority and position. The second handout was a report of a meeting addressed by Amirul Islam at Kushtia.

Meanwhile, Mohammed Ali and Rahmat Ali spent all of March 31 in a well-guarded room discussing future plans. It was arranged that they would leave for Delhi on April 1 to have talks with the highest Indian authorities. The Indian Parliament had, on March 31, adopted a resolution which left no one in doubt where India's sympathies lay. It declared quite openly its support and sympathy for the liberation struggle. Though it is obvious that the resolution was passed without consulting either Mohammed Ali or Rahmat Ali, there could be no better groundwork for their meeting with the Indian leaders. In the meantime, there was the promised meeting on the Krishnagar-Kushtia border between the strangers now identified as Mohammed Ali and Rahmat Ali and the district leaders of Kushtia and Chuadanga.

I got an account of the meeting from one of the participants. Pleasantries and embraces over, they sat down in a closed room without a fan in the scorching April heat and started poring over a map to discuss the Kushtia situation. There was still some hope that with some bridges and roads destroyed, the Pakistan Army could be kept out of a vast area from where the Provisional Government might function. Mohammed Ali even touched on the international situation and sounded a note of caution about China and its agents in Bangladesh. It was agreed at the meeting that Mohammed Ali and Rahmat Ali should go to Delhi and convince the Indian leaders about the nationalistic and secular nature of their struggle and their faith in ultimate victory. The local situation being what it was, it was thought fit to request for "indirect" Indian help. As the leaders came out of the closed room, a uniformed Sub-Inspector of the EPR rushed in and said that a message had been received that the

Pakistan Army had been seen moving towards Chuadanga, that there was great panic and that people were helpless without Major Osman Choudhury to give them courage. The SDO, Choudhury, and the SDPO, Mehboob, stayed back to fortify their cause with some much-needed hardware.

This was the first time that some help was given to the Bangladesh people on a specific request and in a specific situation when the Pakistan Army was moving in. This help was put to good use the same day against the advancing Pakistan Army destroying three trucks and killing 18 soldiers including a Captain. The same day Mohammed Ali and Rahmat Ali left by a special plane for Delhi accompanied by BSF officers. There was no longer any doubt in their minds, no fear that they would be trapped by India, and a firm belief that India's withholding of help would lead to this struggle petering out. The on-the-spot decision of the BSF to give help had greatly impressed the visitors. They reached Delhi at midnight and were whisked away to a secluded bungalow. Their movements in Delhi were shrouded in secrecy but there were reasons to believe that they had at least four meetings with the highest Indian authority besides meeting several officials. They drafted, among other things, a statement chronicling the events in Bangladesh and justifying the struggle for independence. This document was later circulated to the Press on April 17. Meanwhile, other personalities had started arriving at various border points and the BSF, with uncanny knowledge, isolated them from the general influx of refugees which had, by then, begun to swell. Agartala, Dhubri, Siliguri, Raigunj, Krishnagar and Bongaon became their assembly points where they gratefully accepted Indian hospitality and security.

The two leaders had been kept informed of the arrivals and it was decided that they should visit these border points and not only get a first hand assessment of the internal situation in Bangladesh but also give them an account of India's sympathy for their cause. Reaching Calcutta on April 9, Mohammed Ali and Rahmat Ali, along with about ten other MNAs and MPAs, undertook a journey of the border areas. The next morning they went to Agartala via Malda, Balurghat, Bagodogra, Rupsi and Silchar. They returned to their base on April 13.



One of the major tasks which had to be undertaken was the formation of a government. Tajuddin Ahmed was not universally accepted as next-in-line in the party. Amongst others, Khondkar Mushtaq Ahmed (who was to have been the Speaker of the National Assembly) could lay a claim to that position. However, the visits to all the border points afforded an opportunity to the MNAs and MPAs to exchange views and arrive at a consensus on the members of the Cabinet. By popular choice, the mantle fell on Tajuddin Ahmed. The announcement of this government created no little confusion. Some self-appointed Publicity Officers began giving out the news here and there without waiting for the official declaration from the *Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra* (Free Bangladesh Radio).

Major Zia was the first to use the Chittagong Radio for this purpose. The station was damaged by the Pakistan Air Force soon after and a gallant body of workers carried the transmitter piece by piece to a safe border area. They re-assembled it and the feeble but free voice of Bangladesh Radio began to be heard from April onwards. Bangladesh nationalists had managed to erect another transmitter on the northern borders of the country from which was broadcast the voice of Tajuddin Ahmed as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. How many would have listened to this broadcast or known about it is doubtful but for some imaginative planning by the BSF and AIR. While a gist of the broadcast as monitored by them was made available to the Press, unofficially, the recording made was also re-broadcast by All India Radio from its powerful transmitters.

What might have been a drab re-broadcast of a speech poorly recorded, turned out to be an eloquent commentary interlarded with Sheikh Mujib's voice and the soul-stirring song entitled *Bangladesh* by one Angsuman Roy.

March 25 onwards, All India Radio became the only source of news and inspiration for millions of Bengalis in Bangladesh. This is not to belittle its role in the earlier days when for months and years together, AIR had directed its transmitters at listeners in East Pakistan telling them of the importance of language, benefits of democracy and the underlying unity among the people of two Bengals. That night, when Angsuman Roy's heart-rending song was followed by Tajuddin Ahmed's broadcast,

eyes glistened and sluggish blood coursed fast. Tajuddin was alive! It was his voice! It was the voice of hope! Under mango groves and in dimly-lit kitchens, people heard the voice. When it stopped, they began to shout to their neighbours: "Have you heard?" The effect of this broadcast was electrifying. Suddenly, there was a centre of radiance in the totality of gloom and despair. It was like a solitary tree in the desert. It promised an oasis to come.

The Provisional Government was formed on April 10, and announced the next day. Nazrul Islam was chosen Vice-President and (in the absence of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman) was made Acting President; Tajuddin Ahmed was the Prime Minister; Kamaruzzaman, the Home and Relief Minister; Khondkar Mushtaq Ahmed, the Foreign Minister; and Captain Mansoor Ali, the Finance Minister. Having taken this important step, the leaders came back to their operational headquarters.

All this time, through the BSF, the Press had been kept informed of the political trends and fed with important policy statements. Tajuddin Ahmed even ridiculed in one of his statements the Pakistan claim that people who had surrendered their licensed firearms were being given back those arms since "the situation was normal." Tajuddin Ahmed pointed out that people had listened to the Awami League's advice and had not surrendered their arms—so the question of these being returned did not arise. In another statement, he appealed to all powers, particularly Ceylon, not to help the butchers of Pakistan by giving them transit and other facilities.

The difficulty, however, was lack of authentic news. There were reports, sporadic and speculative, of things happening inside Bangladesh and in West Pakistan. From the BSF's unofficial source, the Press came to know of fightings and of bridges and culverts being destroyed. It was obvious that inside Bangladesh, though the Pakistan Army was fanning out, there were pockets of resistance and demolition squads were active near the Comilla border on the east and Rangpur border on the north. Some of the jobs performed with professional competence showed such a deep understanding of the strategic importance of targets that it led many to suspect the presence of foreign advisers. The truth, however, was that the Bengali boys

of the EBR were fully trained in all military operations and were quite capable of undertaking such military tasks. Others, with a little training, became capable enough. Guts they already had in plenty.

Yet, talking to the *Mukti* Commanders later, I was told that though they had destroyed some bridges and culverts, they were prevented from destroying many more by the "political elements." It was held that these bridges and roads were "national property" and should serve free Bangladesh's needs in future. That the Pak Army's immediate needs would be served better did not occur to the politicians, and Bangladesh paid heavily for their folly. Later, with the intensification of the liberation struggle, even local people prevented the *Mukti* boys from undertaking sabotage work fearing reprisals from the Pakistan Army.

The Pakistan Army's strength in Bangladesh was one Division plus at the beginning of 1971. However, through massive air and sea-borne reinforcements throughout March, April and May, the Army's strength went up by at least two more Divisions. By the middle of April, it had consolidated its position and had fanned out in many directions. They were in a commanding position at most places and if they did not move right up to the border, it was due to strategic considerations rather than their inability to do so. One of the areas still unvisited by the Pakistanis was Meherpur sub-division in Kushtia.

Meanwhile, the Awami League leaders were in complete disarray. They were getting reports and visitors loud with tales of woe. Not much organisational work could be thought of, much less executed, by this band of demoralised people. There were suggestions that a large number of posters should be printed and distributed in Bangladesh. Nobody seemed to anticipate that a poster in a village would be like a red rag to a bull and the Army would ransack whole villages. Another suggestion was to take "hundreds of *Joi Bangla* gramophone records" inside for playing at village gatherings. That they could hardly get inside, much less organise mass meetings, did not strike anybody. Yet, the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh had been announced and people's hopes ran high everywhere. Where was this government? Where were

the Ministers? People had heard some of their voices over the Free Bangladesh Radio and All India Radio which had broadcast monitored versions. In a broadcast, the Prime Minister, Tajuddin Ahmed, had appealed to the people of the world to "visit Bangladesh and see the reality of Bangladesh." But what was the reality? City after city which had earlier been proclaimed as "liberated" fell to the advancing Army. The EBR, EPR and the police were in complete disarray and had sought and got sanctuary on Indian soil. They were so panicky that even in company-strength, they would not venture more than a few hundred yards inside Bangladesh.

There was urgent need that the Government of Bangladesh should be established visually and not merely on paper. It was necessary that people see the leaders in person on Bangladesh soil. It was necessary that Ministers take the oath of office ceremonially watched by the "eyes of the world." Here was a challenging job and the BSF was again called upon to help. The function had to be held on Bangladesh soil, in public, and the Pakistanis kept away. The task of organising the function was imposed on the Awami leaders with suitable help from the BSF which was to mobilise the international Press, Radio and Television to witness and record the ceremony. The place had to be kept secret. But Awami leaders (and some members of the district administration) were shaky. The Army was 40 miles away from the mango grove at Baidyanathtala, in Meherpur sub-division of Kushtia, the place chosen for the ceremony. It was here that some friendly pressure was put on the wavering Bangladesh leaders—they were told that for the good of their country they had to surface at least once, and it was now or never. Nobody knew what the situation would be 48 hours later but on that day, April 15, they were pretty sure that they could go through the function at the appointed place and on the appointed date—April 17. The shaded mango grove would give them protection from aerial detection and the Border Security Force post at Haridaypur in Krishnagar was hardly 700 yards away on a motorable road, in case of emergency. Meanwhile, everybody was to keep his mouth shut. It was pointed out that if information leaked out in India or in Bangladesh it would take the Pakistanis hardly a few hours and the Pakistan Air Force a

few minutes to strike at the venue.

The most difficult part was the task of mobilising the international Press who had sensed something and had been biting their nails in helpless frustration all these days. The energetic BSF officer who had been handling the Press since the crisis erupted proved his ingenuity once again. On April 15 he started throwing feelers of a major breakthrough in the news and urged the Press to "keep in touch" with him, at the same time pleading his ignorance of the nature or date of the "happening." The Press, its appetite whetted, started making frantic enquiries but drew a blank. To add to the confusion next day the local Press Information Bureau and the Chief PRO of the Army started telling them that something might happen soon. The Press did keep in touch and the telephone wires hummed throughout the day. The hottest speculation was that the Government of India was going to recognise Bangladesh. Some thought that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (whose whereabouts were not known) might surface. By 4 P.M., the suspense had become unbearable when the BSF officer at last opened his mouth: "Would you [the Press] kindly assemble at the Press Club at 7 P.M.," requested the officer.

There was a chorus of shouts from the pressmen. "Should we bring our cars? Can we bring out TV cameras?"

"Yes, you may," the officer replied.

By 7 P.M. that evening, the Calcutta Press Club was like a circus with about 50 foreign newspapermen and an equal number of Indian pressmen, all taut with impatience. At 7.10 P.M., the Secretary of the Press Club brought two strangers. He told the assembled gathering: "Please, no photographs, no shooting, no recording, here are two representatives of Bangladesh to make an announcement."

The younger of the two, Rahmat Ali, said softly: "Gentlemen, please come here tomorrow morning at 6 A.M. I shall have a message for you from my Prime Minister."

There was near pandemonium: "What message? Who is your Prime Minister? Are you taking us to Bangladesh?"

Rahmat Ali replied patiently: "Please forgive us. All we can tell you is that the message is from Mr Tajuddin Ahmed, our Prime Minister. Please come here at 6 A.M. tomorrow."

The meeting broke amidst disgruntled murmurs and the two Bangladesh representatives disappeared through the backdoor of the Press Club. I was later told that they had a joy-ride trying to dodge any suspected "tail." The BSF officer was conspicuously absent. A message was sent to the secret hideout of the Ministers of Bangladesh to arrive at 11.30 A.M. (Bangladesh time) at the appointed place.

Next morning (April 17), the Calcutta Press Club was a bigger circus with about 40 cars and jeeps ready to go. Rahmat Ali arrived, accompanied by the BSF officer and another gentleman, whom we shall describe, to avoid him embarrassment, as ASA. The announcement was made: "Gentlemen you are invited by my Prime Minister to visit Bangladesh and witness the formal inauguration ceremony. We hope you have your transport. If not, we must have everything ready in an hour. Then we leave."

Leave for where? and the BSF officer took over: "Gentlemen, follow this jeep up to Krishnagar. At Krishnagar, you regroup and then follow this jeep to the border. You may not like to cross the border."

Some laughed at this joke. Here they were, cooling their heels for weeks and they were being told that they might not like to cross the border to cover the event. The BSF might be tough but the Press people were tougher. The motorcade arrived at the border point at Haridaypur and the cars were flagged into Bangladesh over a dusty, unmetalled road. The mango grove provided cool shelter and a reassuring camouflage. Some enterprising correspondents tried to guess the distance from the border, and came to a rough estimate of half a mile. They took pictures of assembled villagers and of the arrangements made.

The function started with *Sonar Bangla* executed with more feeling than art. The Vice-President and the Prime Minister were sworn in and the Ministers took the oath of office one after another. The declaration of independence and a Presidential order were read out. Then the Prime Minister, Tajuddin Ahmed, read a long statement in English giving a detailed account of the background and culmination of the Bangladesh movement. Cyclostyled copies were distributed to the international Press—there were over 150 newsmen representing the major news, film and TV organisations and newspapers. After the ceremony,

the pressmen went from one leader to another asking questions. At last they had seen them, heard them, talked to them; and photographed them. Bangladesh was a reality, not merely in the hearts of the people, but in the eyes of the international Press and through them millions of people all over the world! If the guard of honour was not up to the mark, the Commander-in-Chief with his short (five feet, two inches) frame and handlebar moustache was. In fact, Colonel M.A.G. Osmani made a great impression with his clipped English and brusque military manners in the best traditions of British officers. He had "managed" to join the Awami League High Command through the Agartala border. As he told one of his confidants: "I had two suitcases with me but very little clothes and much less hope. I knew that we were losing the first round almost the moment the Pak troops came out in the open. We had to regroup and reorganise... but with what? I had occasion to consult some of our BSF friends—one of them told me bluntly that the EPR and the police were not fighting at all but running away merely at the sound of gunfire. I knew the man was sincere in talking so openly. I felt bitter inside. Earlier, I had asked them to do certain things. They said, they could not or rather would not. Time was important and more than time...."

To equip Colonel Osmani sartorially proved quite difficult but once he discarded the kurta and pyjama and donned the beret and the khaki, he was a passable C-in-C of the guerrilla army. What he lacked in height and weight, he made up amply with his personality. He knew how to give a command and to see that the command was obeyed. As far as is known about him, he was a Deputy Director of Military Operations in the Pakistan Army before he was retired by General Ayub. He had become an MNA. As soon as he made contact with the Awami League leaders he left no doubt that only he could don the C-in-C's beret and none else. At this mango grove ceremony, he was officially made the Defence Minister.

To an American correspondent's question, Colonel Osmani was prompt and biting in his reply: "Yes, the Pak Army was strong because it had arms supplied by your country. My troops are also strong because they have captured lots of such arms from the Pak Army."

Colonel Osmani came out of the Press Conference with flying colours. So did Tajuddin Ahmed. He was grilled by many. He said quite openly: "We consider all countries as our friends. This includes India. We are still at war. We need friends."

Was he receiving help from India? Yes, the people of India were supporting Bangladesh. He was grateful to India for its moral help. If he claimed that Bangladesh was free and his forces were in control, why not hold the function in the interior?

"Gentlemen, please understand. It is for your safety. The Pak marauders may attack you from the air...." This went on and on, but Tajuddin Ahmed displayed all the qualities of a diplomat and seasoned politician. In fact, it was he who had realised the importance of this "surfacing" ceremony and had persuaded his sceptical colleagues. He told one of his friends later: "This was a risk worth taking. After all, when my people were dying in thousands, what if I also died... somebody else would have stepped in."

The danger was real. The Pakistan Army was only 40 miles away and they could have made it in two or three hours. It can be presumed, however, that the BSF had kept the place under observation with adequate fire-cover. Some pyjama-clad youths with bulging bellies watched the proceedings with what seemed more than professional interest. In the game of war, everything is fair. The BSF would not want to take any credit, but whoever planned the function or masterminded the operation deserves a rich tribute. The Press mobilisation was flawless and made a great impact. The phantom had taken off his mask to reveal a grim face and a fixed mind. As the cars carrying the leaders moved away in the midday heat leaving a trail of dust, the blessings and goodwishes of the whole world went with them. As the dusty Press cars returned to Calcutta the Central Telegraph Office hummed with activity, reporters got busy and the airline offices were jammed by TV people air-freighting coverages.

Meanwhile, another drama was being enacted in a building on Circus Avenue in Calcutta. Outwardly, everything was placid. The Pakistan flag fluttered, the iron gates remained closed except when a car honked outside or the Deputy High Commissioner or his officers drove out. The Deputy High Commissioner, Hussain Ali, was a handsome man who looked at visitors



through his glasses with disarming frankness rather than diplomatic suavity. He was a devoted family man, his wife a good housewife and the children, mod and trendy, were studying in English schools. He was a career diplomat of the Pakistan Foreign Service and quite a non-controversial figure whom hardly anybody would suspect of "defective" tendencies.

Yet, Hussain Ali was a troubled man. A regular smoker, he had become a chain smoker in the previous few days. Things were happening in his own country hardly 50 miles away with bewildering rapidity. He was too near the volcano not to feel its heat and too human not to be involved. Here he was in comfortable luxury serving his government and under oaths of loyalty, allegiance and official secrecy. He was to uphold his country's interest and prestige in an "unfriendly" country. During the last two years, he had been scrupulously observing the Pakistan National Day, Qaid-e-Azam's birthday and propagating the beneficial aspects of a decade of progress under the military rulers.

But he was getting incredible reports from across the border. He and his staff had believed that the Awami League would come to power once elections were held. Secretly, they had welcomed the emergence of the Sheikh as the supreme leader of East Pakistan and hated the prospect of the Sheikh's party dominating the whole of Pakistan. Hussain Ali had scrupulously reported Indian reactions to the emergence of Sheikh Mujib, he had faithfully sent clippings of Indian newspapers to the Foreign Office and had deplored the easy access of Indian newspapermen to the other side of the border. In other words, he was doing his duty as he understood it.

Yet, things were happening which had shaken his sense of duty and discipline. The Army had pounced on the elected representatives of the people, disarmed the police and fired on the Bengalis, ruthlessly killing them. Those who suffered were too afraid to speak; those who spoke, did so with one voice. It was an orgy in the best traditions of Nadir Shah or Chengez Khan. There were in all about a 100 employees in the Deputy High Commission, 70 of them Bengalis. Whispered conversations were heard and furtive looks exchanged; no, the receptionist could not be trusted; no, you never know what the *Paschimas*

(people of West Pakistan) might do. The atmosphere was one of suspense and within a short time, one of action. Shahabuddin and Amjadul Huq, two minor diplomats in the Pakistan High Commission in Delhi, had defected in the first week of April. What were they to do? Hussain Ali's consumption of cigarettes increased enormously. To those of his staff who approached him, he could do no better than urge caution and patience. If something should be done, it should be done jointly and boldly.

Someone from the Deputy High Commission contacted the West Bengal Ministers at Writers' Building, but he was sent from pillar to post, each man disowning responsibility. After all, we have an abundance of men without vision. Mohammed Ali, before he left on his tour of the border areas, had been sounding his friends and well-wishers to establish contact with the Deputy High Commission and sound the employees. Still it took them over ten days to establish contact with Hussain Ali, though he was available on the telephone and was moving about and meeting people quite freely. Anyway, nothing could happen without a "discussion" and the feeler for a top-level discussion between Mohammed Ali and Hussain Ali had become overdue. A common friend close to Mohammed Ali was asked to arrange this meeting.

Calcutta provided ample opportunities for a secret meeting. The Victoria Memorial is the venue for many match-making "secret" meetings amidst thousands of strollers and vendors. Hundreds of people gather on the river-front or in the *maidan* individually or in groups, naked to the waist or sartorially impeccable, without arousing any suspicion whatever. Hussain Ali sometimes went for a stroll and on April 14 he did so simply and very casually. The Park Circus *maidan* was very near his Deputy High Commission and he was among a few hundred idlers and strollers completely anonymous. A black Ambassador car halted and Hussain Ali got inside. Inside the car, Mohammed Ali shook his hand but did not say anything. Nor was Hussain Ali disposed to talk. He threw away his half-burnt cigarette and promptly lighted another. He offered one to Mohammed Ali who declined the offer.

The car reached the river-front on the Strand Road in Calcutta, just ahead of the Man o' War jetty. The Alis got down and spoke in low tones while strolling on the grassy patch. The evening

had descended and there were many other strollers, picnickers, vendors and tarts. After about 90 minutes, the two shook hands warmly and got into the waiting car.

A decision of a momentous nature could hardly be taken after a 90-minute talk. For Mohammed Ali, the decision to fight Pakistan had been forced on him. For Hussain Ali, the decision had to be taken by him. It is not a piddling decision for a non-political career bureaucrat. He lost all taste for food and only gallons of tea and hundreds of cigarettes sustained him for the next few days. It is at this stage that Mrs Hussain Ali, the self-effacing housewife, spoke out. She had been deeply hurt by what was happening in East Pakistan. Her husband's agony made her open her heart one evening. She spoke forcefully. She said in effect: "Let us die of starvation but let us not serve the dogs anymore." She was a great source of strength and courage for Hussain Ali. By now, Ali knew the minds of his colleagues in the Deputy High Commission and he took the first steps towards the final decision. He was worried about security. Everyday, demonstrations were being held outside his Deputy High Commission protesting against the Pakistani genocide.

Inside the Deputy High Commission, there were elements from West Pakistan, fewer, but fanatical in outlook. He again got in touch with a friendly source who assured him that there would be no problem of security. He had deposited about Rs 470,000 at the National & Grindlays Bank, on behalf of the Pakistan Foreign Office. He was advised to withdraw the amount. Safe escort was assured to him. There had to be another meeting with Mohammed Ali before the latter got busy with the inauguration ceremony of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on April 17. The meeting took place at the Skyroom, one of the posh Park Street restaurants, in a dimly lit corner. Sandwiches and coffee had been ordered but Hussain Ali by now was a nervous wreck and could not touch a scrap of food. He was nearing the most crucial period of his life when he would be disloyal, rebellious and as a result, almost a destitute. If he took no decision at all, he could remain loyal, comfortable and secure. At this crossroad of history, his mind wandered to the city of Dacca which was now in shambles, his friends who had been killed, his wife, who was fearful. His hands were

the Deputy High Commission premises that night. Suddenly, I remembered that the key to my car, the Deputy High Commission car, was with my driver who was a non-Bengali. I immediately sent one of our Bengali friends to his house asking him to send the key that night. When he came to deposit the key we did not open the gate of the Deputy High Commission but asked him to drop it in the letter box. Actually we were so scared that four of us drove in a car at about 2 A.M. around the Deputy High Commission premises to make sure that nobody was watching and everything was all right. My money was mostly locked up in Islamabad and I had very little cash with me. My youngest daughter started crying when my wife told her that we must sell our radiogram and all of our records. We sold my wife's saris, the radiogram, record-player, chinaware and my wife's jewellery so that we could manage to pass the difficult months ahead. All these I consider my personal contribution towards the national struggle for which I could not fight with guns."

By evening, however, many felt cheered by the news of the inauguration of the government at the mango grove at Baidyanathtala. All India Radio had not only flashed the news but broadcast a recorded description of the function including excerpts from the speeches of the Acting President, Syed Nazrul Islam, and the Prime Minister, Tajuddin Ahmed.

April 18 morning broke out gusty and drizzling, perhaps heralding the year's first nor-wester. Later it rained heavily and the atmosphere inside the Deputy High Commission was gloomy and uncertain. There were hushed consultations and brisk comings and goings. Outside, several pyjama clad characters were seen moving aimlessly. Sometimes, a car would glide away slowly with passengers casting curious glances at the closed gate of the Deputy High Commission. A man purchased a packet of cigarettes from one shop and within minutes he was seen on the opposite pavement purchasing another packet from another shop. He did not even change the brand. A cobbler suddenly found ready customers coming one after another for shines on their well-polished shoes. Life on Circus Avenue was otherwise placid. As the minutes ticked into hours, the traffic thinned. The weather became fouler.

It was necessary to know Hussain Ali's mind, but it was not

help. Power, at that time, was in their pockets and they were the future rulers of Pakistan. India did not matter. Yet, when they ran helter-skelter after the Army crackdown, India came to their succour without any reservations. In international diplomacy it is customary to put some pre-conditions before help is rendered particularly when the other party is in distress. India behaved like a friend rather than a "diplomatic" friend. That India allowed the Bangladesh Mission to function independently from Calcutta is proof of this friendship. That Hussain Ali continued to use the CD numberplate on his car is another minor but positive proof that short of formal recognition, India would go the whole hog.

Why was no recognition given at that time? We Indians heard in silence the bitter words of complaint from the Bangladesh politicians about Indian procrastination in recognising Bangladesh. I watched with amusement when an outspoken American correspondent, in response to a similar nagging complaint about the recognition of Bangladesh by the USA, exploded: "OK, OK, I recognise you. Tell me the airfield where I can land with my plane."

Whatever Bangladesh leaders might say, it should be conceded by even the bitterest critics of India that recognition at that time would have been hasty, unwise and dangerous. Enemies of Bangladesh had been shouting that the revolt was an India-inspired movement. Hasty recognition would have "proved" it.

Though ultimately the Indian Army and the Border Security Force moved in, it was under a unified command with the *Mukti Bahini*. If the Indian Armed Forces had moved in the early stages, it would have been a victory for India while the people of Bangladesh and their *Mukti Bahini* could hardly have taken any credit for their country's liberation.

The purpose of this analysis is not to blame the Bangladesh politicians who wanted India to recognise their country. It is quite on the cards that in such a partisan war, the partisans try to get others deeply involved in their fight. Those who are helping the partisans, similarly, are on their guard not to get involved more than is strictly necessary. The situation prevailing in Pakistan was not exactly ripe for direct Indian involvement,

of you that I have remained silent so long... it is because of you and your job. Don't stop me. Let me tell them today what is in my heart."

Tears were running continuously down her cheeks. Her voice was choked and the words came out in broken jerks. It was a moving scene, and hardly any eyes were dry. Utterly unsophisticated, her Bengali had the thick brogue of East Bengal, but here was emotion—raw, courageous, stupendous. What she was saying came from her heart.

When this bit of the interview was later broadcast that night, millions of Bengali hearts were wrung in sympathy, millions more were aroused in helpless anger. (A similarly moving interview was broadcast a few days later at the Deputy High Commission. It was a teenage girl who shrieked in fear each time the tape-recorder was brought before her and who had lost her voice after her harrowing experiences in Bangaldesh.)

The immediate difficulty with the Pakistani elements in the Deputy High Commission was tackled by the Bangladesh loyalists firmly. They were unceremoniously bundled out of the Deputy High Commission. However, their security was ensured by the West Bengal Government since India had diplomatic relations with Pakistan and not with Bangladesh. These Pakistanis were later repatriated when the Indian Deputy High Commission in Dacca was closed down and the staff brought to India through Swiss mediation. That, however, is outside the scope of this book.

The defection of Hussain Ali and the Government of India's acquiescence in his contriving as the Head of the Bangladesh Mission was, in effect, a recognition of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. In later months, bitter criticism was to be heard from Bangladesh politicians that India was dragging her feet and withholding recognition because: (a) India was not interested in the disintegration of Pakistan; (b) India was deeply under Soviet influence; (c) India wanted to put pressure on Pakistan only to get a better advantage in Kashmir; and (d) India was afraid.

The last accusation was the most unkind. India took the boldest step when it decided to help the Bangladesh movement. None of the Bangladesh leaders had even asked India to be ready to

confirmed this reading. He said : "When these fellows [Awami leaders] had ordered their sherwanis in anticipation of the oath-taking ceremony, I got into the boat in anticipation of the Pak Army action...." The 90-year old man, however, was mentally shattered when he came to know of the Army atrocities. He had learnt that his house had been burnt including his library which contained some rare editions of the *Quran*. He did not know where his wives or children were. He surfaced at Dhubri on or about April 14 and had a brief meeting with the Indian Minister, Moinul Huq Chowdhury, which was reported in the Press. Then he disappeared for some days till the world heard of him through a series of telegrams he sent to President Nixon of the USA; Chairman Mao Tse-tung and Premier Chou-En-lai of China; Kosygin of the USSR; and U Thant, Secretary-General of the UN.

The Calcutta Press Club was again the venue at which the Maulana's telegrams were made public by one of his representatives. The Press had gathered there to see a film on the Dacca genocide and was urged by the BSF officer to "wait for a few minutes" for an important development. And sure enough, after the projection was over, a young man introduced himself as Maulana Bhasani's representative and read out the telegrams sent to world leaders. So Maulana Bhasani was at least safe. Nothing much was heard about him till a Calcutta paper came out with the startling statement that the 90-year old National Awami Party leader was virtually under arrest by the Government of India. The same charge was made on the floor of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly by a Communist member. All speculation, however, came to rest when next day, two local dailies published pictures and an interview with him "somewhere in Bangladesh." Later, there was another Press interview with the NAP leader, perhaps "elsewhere" in Bangladesh. I had asked this veteran leader about the truth of these allegations and he laughed heartily. He said: "I have spent years in jail. But when I am underground, there is no one on earth who can find me. I had gone underground and I refused to meet one of my partymen and he spread the rumour. It was a lie."

Did he have any complaints about the Government of India while he was underground or now? "If *kafir* Hindustan was not,

political or military. The impending monsoons, Pakistan's build-up on the Western front and a real threat from the Chinese in warm weather were some of the major military factors which India had to weigh. Politically, there was not an iota of reason for being hasty in recognising Bangladesh, unless of course India cherished motives of acquiring Bangladesh territory for empire building. India would have laid herself open to the charge if she had intervened earlier.

The reception of the political leaders and the administrative support given to Bangladesh are feathers in the cap of the Government of India. Though by the middle of April 1971, hundreds of political leaders had arrived, we shall concentrate on the arrival of only two personalities from Bangladesh: Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani in April and Sheikh Abu Nasser in July.

Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan, known as Bhasani Sahib, comes from a "char" land (sandy island formed in a river bed during the dry season) of that name. "Bhasani Char" still exists—so does Maulana Bhasani as a religious leader in the heart of hundreds of his *mureeds* (disciples). The political elasticity and astuteness of Maulana Bhasani are universally known and dreaded. He was an architect of the Muslim League as also of the Awami League. He worked actively for the partition of India and when the partition of Bengal was becoming a reality, he suddenly became a votary of undivided sovereign Bengal. He even claims that he was instrumental in collecting over 140 signatures (including those of Sarat Chandra Bose, H.S. Suhrawardy, S.P. Mukherji and A.K. Fazlul Huq) in support of the idea.

Those who admire him and those who dread him politically have the same adjective to describe him—slippery. As one of the leaders said to me: "You cannot catch Bhasani Sahib. When we were talking of independence, he would talk of a settlement; when we talk of settlement, he talks of independence. We are sure that Maulana Bhasani has a special antenna—a built-in radar in [*sic*] which he can anticipate all political developments. He was too wily for the Pakistanis... he would have escaped anyway."

In one of the unpublicised interviews, Maulana Bhasani



hitting the problems hard on the head.

During the April-December period, the Awami League had sponsored at least three weekly newspapers—the *People*, *Joi Bangla* and *Banglar Bani*. The NAP (Wali-Muzaffar) brought out one weekly, *Natun Bangla*. Maulana Bhasani issued pamphlets. Their style, language and contents make interesting reading revealing not only the ideologies of such parties but also the undercurrents of trends and inherent hostilities.

It is not generally known that Bhasani was not always trusted by the Awami leadership. Maulana Bhasani's telegrams were seen by the top Awami leaders. The Maulana had to, though nobody told him to, atone for his alleged pro-Peking attitude by emphasising again and again that China had betrayed the cause of the people of Bangladesh by supporting the Yahya regime. I had occasion to talk to him about his alleged "pro-Peking" attitude. He glowered at me and said: "If I am pro-Peking, what was Jawaharlal Nehru? He was more pro-Chinese than I ever was." He explained that he had been to Peking and had had more than one meeting with Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai. He was enlisting support for the people of East Bengal but would not think of "selling their interests or betray their interest." Nor would he act as anybody's agent. What were the things dearest to him? "Islam, Bangladesh and myself"

"Does it mean, you want to be the Head of the Islamic Republic of Bangladesh?" Any other politician, I thought, would have felt embarrassed by the twist I had given to an otherwise innocent statement and would have hastened to correct me. Not so the Maulana. He looked at me closely and said:

"You Hindu Bengalis are fools. You were afraid of Islam. You thought that with [a] 56 per cent majority, the Muslims would have dominated over you. Thirty years ago, we had very few Muslim landlords, Muslim police, Muslim doctors or Muslim lawyers. In the last 20 years, we have seen many such. They are the worst of the exploiters and corrupt people... Muslims have exploited the Muslims to an unimaginable extent. The worst were, of course, the West Pakistanis. We have to import even salt from West Pakistan. There is no industry worth the name anywhere in East Bengal."

As he narrated the events, his eyes glowed. "The bloody fools

there to save us, we would have been finished and completely wiped out in ten days. The Pak Army would have found all of us, herded us together and made us do whatever it liked. We survived because of India...."

I learnt from another source that the Maulana had some complaints initially when he was underground. His hosts had kept him in a beautiful house but the old man pined for a village hut. His hosts were feeding him costly varieties of fish but his rustic palate watered at the thought of shrimp and other small fry cooked in real East Bengal style, with a liberal seasoning of green chilly. He admitted that a kind host had occasionally added these items. He spent some time reading the *Gita* with his new spectacles (he had lost his old pair) and the biographies of eminent Indians. He had a transistor radio which he carried with him wherever he went. After spending a few days underground he spent some time in the liberated Bangladesh area near Bhurungamari. His failing health necessitated his removal to Dehra Dun, in the Himalayan foothills and later to Delhi where he attended the Id prayer meeting and was photographed by the Press.

During the underground days and when he was in Bangladesh, the Maulana issued at least four Press statements with datelines varying from Sylhet to Mymensingh. They were consistently critical of the Pakistani military rulers and in complete agreement with the policies of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, though it was purely an Awami League Government. The Maulana made it clear on one occasion that the Awami League had become victorious in the election. It was up to the Awami League to suggest a National Coalition Government. For the time being, all support should be given to the government already formed, was the Maulana's opinion. However, in sharp contrast with the platitudes expressed in the publications of the Awami League, the Maulana was more pragmatic and suggested in his pamphlets steps against hoarding, steps for religious burial of those killed by the Army and practical methods to combat the Army in occupation. The Awami leaders were adept in using high flown Bengali and talked vaguely of the problems facing the people. Theirs was an intellectual approach for the middle and higher classes while the Maulana, a son of the soil, spoke directly to the masses in a language they could understand,

important in the political, social and cultural fields came away. There were hundreds of refugees. On certain days, the number exceeded 100,000.

Sheikh Abu Nasser, the brother of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman arrived later in July from the Khulna side through the Boyra border. He was interceded by the BSF and sent to Calcutta. Though he was a businessman and not a politician, Sheikh Nasser, because of his relationship with Sheikh Mujib, soon became a popular figure in Calcutta and elsewhere. A man of strong commonsense, he mobilised support for the cause of Bangladesh at many places including Bombay.

I was curious to know how the people of Bangladesh viewed the large-scale migration of their leaders to India. Sheikh Nasser gave a very neat answer to one of my friends who had occasion to meet him. He said: "Our people realise that nothing can be done in Bangladesh because of the Pak Army. They expect people like us to migrate to India to do something, at least get some help. As a matter of fact, in my case, they helped me to move out as a bullock-cart driver. They will wait for us to do something. If we do, they will be grateful. If we do not, the doors are closed for us...."

Looking at the politicians in Calcutta, one would doubt if all of them felt the same urgency or even the urge. More often than not, they spent their time and energy criticising the foreign Powers for not ousting the Yahya regime by force. That Pakistan was a sovereign country with a mighty army did not weigh with them at all. Yet, I heard from a number of them of the toughness and efficiency of the Pakistan Army and their misgiving as to whether the Indian Army was a match for them. Evidently some of them accepted the Pakistani claim that one Pakistani soldier was equal to ten Indian soldiers.

At the same time, they were full of praise for Bengali soldiers in the Pakistani Army who were said to have distinguished themselves in the 1965 war between India and Pakistan. It is not the purpose of this book to examine civilian assessments of the prowess of soldiers but the reported bravery of the Bengali soldiers helped in exploding a myth carefully nurtured and propagated by the Pakistan authorities. Often, the Pakistani propaganda machinery would harp on three points: (a) That

in West Pakistan now have lost everything. The British were clever. They wound up in good time leaving at least their market intact in India and Pakistan. The West Pakistanis have not only lost East Pakistan but they have lost the market also... fools."

He then gave a graphic grassroots appraisal of the situation in Bangladesh. The poor had become poorer and a rich, corrupt class had emerged which had amassed huge wealth. But Communism posed no problem in East Pakistan partly because of the religious hold of the *Ulemas*. It will be his (Bhasani's) endeavour to utilise the *Ulemas* to tell the people the truth about everything including, he assured me, India. "Without *kafir* India," he repeated, "we should have been finished and crushed, never to rise again." He looked outside and said: "It is time for my prayer," and without any further comment he put on his cap and started praying, thus ending the interview.

It was only when I was outside and when I was congratulating myself on the excellent material I had got that it dawned on me that the Maulana had skilfully avoided my question—did he want to be Head of the Islamic Republic of Bangladesh? I had to agree with the Awami League leaders—the Maulana was too clever for all of us, including the Pakistanis. Was the Maulana slippery, or had I slipped?

We could sense a slight hostility between the Maulana and the Awami League leaders. A few days passed before Mohammed Ali thought of sending Abdul Mannan, MNA, and "ASA" to the Maulana. Maulana Bhasani, I was told, "gave them hell" for leading the country to such a crisis without making adequate preparations for meeting the crisis. At other times, he was mellow and became mellow when Mohammed Ali's wife and children shared the same flat with the Maulana for a few days. The old man liked the homely atmosphere in the company of children.

The Maulana had by now made public statements protesting against the tacit Chinese support to Pakistani genocide. He had also urged his followers to support the government formed by the Awami League. The Free Bangladesh Radio broadcast his speech which touched on these points and it was well-received in Bangladesh.

In the wake of the refugees fleeing from the Army, people

and they were ready to pounce on the Pakistani oppressors. When they did not get that opportunity, when even a revolver was not available, they brooded. Unfortunately, a soldier is not made in a day. For years together, he undergoes the discipline of command and instant obedience till he becomes a human robot who advances in the face of sure death. Some of the young boys of Bangladesh were not prepared to listen to such academic talk. They had only murder in their eyes. Their only thought was that of revenge.

It was from these young cadres that the FF (freedom fighters) and the *Mujib Bahini* were created. And they proved to be excellent human material.

Till 17 May 1971, the BSF was in sole charge of the administration and operations connected with the *Mukti Bahini*. With their slender resources, they did whatever was possible to help the liberation forces. A great friendship sprang up between the ill-clad and sometimes half-fed Bengali boys and the tough BSF personnel.

It was at this time that three BSF personnel fell into the hands of the Pakistan Army in the Bongaon border. They were on routine patrol, the three men claimed, when they were pounced upon by the Pakistani troops and dragged inside Bangladesh. Pakistan claimed that they were well inside Pakistan, near Navaron (Jessore), and were captured after a battle. Although a close bond had developed between the Bangladesh forces and the Border Security Force, the task of helping the *Mukti Bahini* was becoming too big for the BSF. Thousands of young men came but very few could be selected. They wanted to go into action, ill-equipped as they were. Their provisioning needs were getting more and more complex, their training needed expanding phenomenally.

Mohammed Ali had, in the meantime, made another "contact" with the highest Indian source and it had been decided in principle, to help the *Mukti Bahini* materially. As a matter of fact, the position had become anomalous. India was receiving refugees in thousands every day. Nobody was denied shelter. Nor could the members of the *Mukti Bahini* be denied what they wanted. If anybody, including *Mukti Bahini* boys, started youth camps and recruited people from the refugee camps, well, India could not

the Hindus were responsible for Pakistan's miseries and were "dangerous"; (b) India was just waiting to gobble up East Pakistan; and (c) without West Pakistanis, East Pakistan could not be defended by the Bengalis.

The people of Bangladesh, particularly the younger generation laughed at the bogey of Hindus being a threat to their security. They had seen the Hindus cowering at the slightest threat of danger. I was also told that the declaration in 1965 by Lal Bahadur Shastri, the then Prime Minister, that India had no enmity with the people of East Pakistan had an electrifying effect in that country. That India did not push into the almost defenceless East Pakistan in 1965 was universally appreciated. And finally, for good or evil, the Pakistan Army acknowledged the fighting qualities of the Bengalis during the 1965 conflict, thus exploding the myth of East Pakistan's dependence on Western military prowess.

After the initial reverses, the people of Bangladesh remained in a state of shock for a number of days. The Army was fanning out throughout Bangladesh and by the middle of May 1971 there was no place worth the name which was under the control of the Bangladesh fighters. This is not to suggest that they had all been driven out. They were, however, forced into their secret hideouts all along the borders and even in the interior. They could not stand before the Pakistan Army and were mortally afraid of it. Sometimes, tasks were given to the *Mukti Bahini* units which remained not only unfulfilled but even unattempted. They would go a few hundred yards, fire a few shots at random at the unseen enemy miles away, and run back to their borderland sanctuaries.

The Border Security Force units all along the border had by then been strengthened by the addition of a few extra battalions moved from Tekanpur, Hazaribagh and Rajasthan. They, with their limited resources, were a great strength to the demoralised personnel of the *Mukti Bahini*, mostly composed of EBR, EPR, Police and *Ansars*.

Slowly there was a change in the composition of the *Mukti Bahini*. Young students, peasant youths and many others were assembling at various sanctuaries, angry, desperate and full of fight. They just wanted an opportunity, just one 'revolver,

and they were ready to pounce on the Pakistani oppressors. When they did not get that opportunity, when even a revolver was not available, they brooded. Unfortunately, a soldier is not made in a day. For years together, he undergoes the discipline of command and instant obedience till he becomes a human robot who advances in the face of sure death. Some of the young boys of Bangladesh were not prepared to listen to such academic talk. They had only murder in their eyes. Their only thought was that of revenge.

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very well object. India was looking after their welfare, not their morals. In any case, nobody had done anything to stop the influx of refugees. India was morally bound to give them shelter. If some of them proved to be freedom fighters, it was just too bad for Pakistan who should have treated them better. India had made no secret of her "sympathy and support" for the freedom fighters. The Parliament resolution is very clear on that point. But this task of extending sympathy and support was becoming too big for the BSF and the Indian Army, the Cabinet Secretariat and the Ministry of External Affairs came into the picture after May 17. Even then, the excellent rapport between the BSF and the freedom fighters and the *Mukti Bahini* continued. There was great camaraderie and understanding.

As days passed, the Bangladesh boys became more and more daring. Will and purpose they had in plenty. Now they developed nerves of steel. They would make forays deep inside the country, suddenly attack a Pakistani outpost and would sometimes stealthily jump on the troops in the trenches. They would destroy bridges, culverts and factories. If the Army had made its presence felt before, it was now the turn of the liberation forces to do so.

Volunteers vastly outnumbered the intake capacity. Again, the Awami League began to insist that none should be recruited unless "politically certified" by the leaders. This was a nasty situation with hundreds of able-bodied and eager volunteers being rejected on political grounds. With the reorganisation of the training and provisioning, a semblance of order was established from mid-May. The boys were better fed, better clothed and better trained. They even had to sign a printed form of oath of allegiance. The Awami League monopoly claim on the *Mukti Bahini* was also supplanted with the emergence of the NAP (Wali-Muzaffar) cadre and the more volatile *Mujib Bahini*. There were many other independent units like *Gono Bahini*, organised with local initiative and under local leadership.

Meanwhile, there was need for a convention of the elected representatives of the people to ratify the decisions already taken and chart the future course of action. Mohammed Ali sent messages to all the members to their known addresses and organised a big convention in the northern area of Bangladesh.

Already, differences had started cropping up among the Cabinet



Ministers though matters had not come to a head. Also, non-Awami League sections had mounted a campaign for the formation of a National Coalition Government. There was vehement opposition from the Awami leaders to this suggestion. They had a point. They had secured 167 out of 169 seats in the Pakistan National Assembly, the other two seats having gone to Nurul Amin and Raja Tridib Roy. If they had to have a coalition, they could have it only with these two who were perfervid Pakistanis. Why should they form a coalition with NAP (Wali-Muzaffar) which had not obtained a single seat and had lost deposits in many constituencies? This was certainly not the mandate of the people. The NAP circles, however, referred to the need for all-party participation in the total war. What was more important was to give the Bangladesh Government the sanctity of law, constitutional and international.

A statement was therefore prepared which said in effect that all the elected representatives of Bangladesh having met had decided on the form and composition of the government. The adjective "all" was a political exaggeration because according to my information about 130 of the 167 Awami League MNAs attended the meeting with another five or six reporting inability to attend. Even then, it was a big achievement to mobilise so many of them and get an agreed constitution approved. This convention was held on 7 July 1971. As in everything else connected with the Bangladesh movement, hasty decisions had to be taken on an *ad-hoc* basis and later these decisions had to be altered at the last minute. A leading Calcutta barrister, Subroto Roy Chowdhury, was associated with this task though the spadework was done by Rahmat Ali, and a legal expert from the BSF. (Actually the declaration of independence as drafted by these experts had already been read out on April 17, and the convention of July 7 ratified it.)

There is a marked difference between the liberation war fought in Bangladesh and the one, for example, in China. In Bangladesh, while the guerrillas fought the classical hit and run battles, built up their bases and channels of communication, the leadership (the Awami League politicians) carried on the government in the best traditions of bureaucracy. By July, a nucleus Secretariat had been set up, files had been opened and papers were moving up

and down with conventional notings, like "For orders please"; "Finance Secretary may kindly examine"; "A self-contained note on this proposal should be prepared for the Prime Minister"; and so on. There were "immediate," "priority" and "PUC" (paper under consideration) slips flagged and tagged neatly. The Secretariat atmosphere was also prevalent with calling bells, endless cups of tea and endless streams of visitors seeking relief and recommendation.

To one of the senior Secretaries, I said: "We have in India the worst of red tape because of this process of file pushing and administration by record. I am sure you also had it in Pakistan. But now that you have got the chance to start anew, why not discard these old methods and revolutionize administration? Why not do something new? He was candid in his reply. He said:

"Look, I know this type of administration. The Ministers hardly know any type of administration but they are at least familiar with this system... it makes sense to them that a proposal initiated by us should be examined from all aspects and put up to him so that he may have the privilege of saying 'Yes' or 'No' to it. If I try to change it I will have it in the neck. Frankly speaking, I am afraid. So is everybody."

It was a sad commentary on a war of liberation when millions had been killed, thousands were dying and many more were prepared to die for the country, that sitting safely in some sanctuaries, people were "afraid" to change the format of the files. There were endless committees and conferences, a Cabinet meeting which started at 4 P.M. would continue till 11 P.M. or even beyond midnight. According to one of the first Cabinet decisions, "Bangladesh" should be written as one word and not as "Bangla Desh." One feels that there were more pressing decisions at home and abroad.

As a matter of fact, the foreign contact seemed to be most baffling. Scores of Bengalis living or settled abroad rushed to India saying that they wanted to help, while scores of Bengalis from Bangladesh wanted to rush abroad to create international public opinion and pressure. The logical thing to do was to ask the Bengalis abroad to undertake that work but nobody thought of doing it. A bitter leader of the Awami League told me: "With

all the help India was giving us, I feel miserable when I see the inefficiency of my people. Tajuddin's Press statement had been printed in thousands. They were neatly stacked. The original intention was to send them to our contacts abroad so that they could get them reprinted or translated and then reprinted. But in effect it was the External Publicity Division of your government which managed to lift a few copies and send them to your embassies. Our people, who were starving for such documents, got them from your embassy...."

Though even such elementary measures were not taken, there was no dearth of people seeking facilities for a foreign trip. Similarly, Bengalis settled abroad came to India in large numbers. The money they spent on their journeys could as well be spent for organising a bit of gun-running for the benefit of Bangladesh. The funds raised by Bengalis abroad were dismally poor and bore no relation to their affluence or their stake in the liberation of their motherland. Here they were, away from home where their relations were being killed and their women folk dishonoured, their dedicated countrymen were fighting a war of independence, and all that they could do or think of was making a collection and contributing a few measly pounds and dollars. It would have been more appropriate if they had given up everything they had and hired mercenaries and saboteurs and done some gun-running. The silent protesters at the cricket fields in England (where a visiting Pakistani team was playing) were amusing rather than effective.

In the Chinese war of liberation, nothing of this sort happened. If Bangladesh is free today it is because of other factors and other people.

The behaviour of the middle and upper class politicians during this period needs closer scrutiny. For months together, all that one could hear from them was how they had escaped, and not surprisingly, their "escape adventures" were mostly drab. There are about 60,000 villages in Bangladesh and it was physically impossible for the Pakistan Army to control even a fraction of them. There was a long borderline of about 4,000 kilometres with India. The Army could seal only a few miles and guard only a few points. The fact that ten million refugees crossed over shows how easy it was to cross over. Yet, that was the talk of the

town with the politicians. Having bored the Indian listeners and each other with their "adventures," the politicians began to feel the absence of an audience and the benefit of mass meetings. The talk immediately centred round the need for a mouthpiece and a powerful radio. Both were made available—not one but three newspapers came out ultimately and suddenly one day the Free Bangladesh Radio blasted the ether.

A Communist leader of international reputation said bitterly: "The Chinese guerrillas had no newspapers nor a radio. The Bangladesh authorities have had both in the course of hardly two months of struggle and look to what use they have been put."

Except for some successful satirical broadcasts, the Bangladesh radio and Press aimed at convincing the already convinced. Their own sense of participation in the liberation war could be gauged from the fact that the artistes of Free Bangladesh Radio went on strike for a few days. The fighters with guns and grenades, the guerrillas with wounds in their bodies and minds and the ten million refugees, not to speak of the countless sufferers inside the country, can all claim to have participated in the liberation war, but today, the most vocal are the white-kurta politicians and intellectuals who could even afford the luxury of a strike during those grim days.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Curtain Raised

The Indians who were close to the Bangladesh leaders often had to hear them grouse, and it goes to their credit that they heard them without protest. Still, charges of Indian interference were heard, whisperingly at first, loudly later. At the Awami League convention, more than one speaker spoke of India's colonising intentions.

The immediate provocation for this charge, however, was D.P. Dhar, the Chairman of the Policy Planning Committee of the Ministry of External Affairs. It was he who first took off the veil of secrecy from the Indian role in the Bangladesh affairs.

Addressing a crowded Press Conference at Calcutta he said that he had several meetings with the Bangladesh leaders in Mujibnagar. This was the first time that such a public assertion of Indian contact was made. Mujibnagar had by then been established as the "floating capital" of Bangladesh. Wherever the leaders chose to speak from came to be known as Mujibnagar. The Bangladesh Mission had also become an important centre for news and meetings. There were liberated pockets inside Bangladesh like Tetulia, Pachagar, Belonia and Chougram where the Pakistan Army chose not to intrude out of prudence.

D.P. Dhar made a great impression on the Bangladesh leaders with his personality, position and stature. He took up residence at the prestigious Hotel Hindustan International in Room 216 (Daily tariff about Rs 175) and was accessible to selected pressmen even after midnight. He was suave at the Press Conference. A correspondent told him that the joint communique issued after Mrs Gandhi's visit to Moscow was confusing as both "East

Pakistan" and "East Bengal" had been used in different versions. This was parried by him. Nor would he like to answer questions relating to alleged requests from Bangladesh for arms. But he said that the leaders were all united in thought and action and that there was great homogeneity in the Cabinet.

Perhaps he said this deliberately because there were reports of conflicts within the Cabinet some of which even might be described uncharitably as a clash of personalities. If these were correct, Dhar most certainly would have tried to iron them out in his capacity as a friend.

Some Bangladesh people said that Dhar had been overbearing. He certainly had a mission when he met the Bangladesh leaders and would, in all probability, have tried to fulfil his mission by argument and persuasion. Those who were forced to accept his argument and persuasion must have found him overbearing. In spite of his amiable nature, there is a bullet-headedness about him which may not have endeared him to all and sundry. His personality cannot be held against Dhar, nor is he responsible for prejudicial judgments against him.

He had come with a mandate from the Prime Minister. It had become increasingly clear that some form of all-party participation was necessary in the war of liberation and in the governance of the State of Bangladesh.

The Awami League's assertion of being the sole representative of the people was challenged by all the other parties except perhaps by NAP (Bhasani) which had little party organisation. It was pointed out that even if the Awami League had secured 167 out of 169 seats in the National Assembly in terms of votes, it had got only 80 per cent. It was also stated that the mandate given to the Awami League was to work within the framework of Pakistan and that after the declaration of independence, the whole situation had changed drastically. A fresh mandate was necessary and till such a mandate was possible, there should be an all-party coalition. The NAP (Wali-Muzaffar) was the most vociferous in this demand claiming the distinction of being the third largest party in Pakistan and the majority party in NWFP, and Baluchistan.

There seemed to be some logic in this; there was force of argument on the Awami League side also. This had to be

reconciled. D.P. Dhar tried to do exactly that. He also dabbled in military affairs trying to assess the military situation in Bangladesh and decide what advice he could give to the government.

Colonel M.A.G. Osmani, who had by now become a full-fledged C-in-C with an operation room, was having difficulty in convincing his colleagues and friends about his requirements. His forces, by September, had become integrated and powerful. The whole of Bangladesh had been divided into several sectors under Sector Commanders. Regular reports were being received at the C-in-C's HQ and Colonel Osmani himself undertook several tours. He was a strict disciplinarian and did his best to bring about discipline in command and control all along the line.

The *Mukti Bahini* had entrenched itself in the Tetulia region so firmly that there was a regular flow of newspapermen and visitors to this area. *Dharmyug*, a Hindi weekly, came out with a series of photographs and accounts of life in the liberated area. Other papers also had interesting accounts. There were such visits by newspapermen at Benapole (Jessore) and at Belonia (Comilla).

A word must be said here of the excellent Press coverage arranged by the Government of India during the Bangladesh crisis. The first Press party (in which were represented Reuter, AP, UPI, *The New York Times*, *The Times*, London, CBS and NBC, besides Indian agencies) organised by PIB visited Petrapole on the day Mrs Gandhi addressed the refugees there. Afterwards, the party was taken right up to the border where the Bangladesh flag was seen flying on the other side over a dilapidated building. On a signal from this side of the border given by the BSF guards, two *Mukti Bahini* officers, Major Osman Chowdhury and Captain Hafiz, emerged from the bushes to the delight of the news-hungry pressmen. They crossed over to the other side and under the shadow of a giant tree had a long palaver with the officers. This was the first opportunity for the Press to interview the *Mukti Bahini* personnel after the middle of April when the Pakistan Army had started dominating the cities and the countryside.

Next day's papers carried a full report of the interviews and a startling headline in *The Times*, London, by Peter Hazelhurst: "Yes. We have killed thousands of non-Bengalis"—Major Osman

As is usual on such occasions, there was a difference of opinion on what Major Osman had actually said. While many thought that the Major had only said that in war anybody siding with the enemy ran the risks of getting killed and thousands of non-Bengalis in Bangladesh were collaborators, Hazelhurst thought that Major Osman was specific about the killing of thousands of non-Bengalis.

This despatch earned for Hazelhurst a prize in the shape of an exclusive interview with Tajuddin Ahmed. Ahmed was anxious to clarify this issue and so agreed to meet Hazelhurst at Benapole under the Bangladesh flag. It was actually a meeting between John Stonehouse and Tajuddin Ahmed and the journalist accompanied Stonehouse.

The second Press party included representatives of the *Sunday Telegraph*, UPI, ABC, *Life-Time* and Japanese and Italian news agencies. The party was taken to a border point at Silchar where the journalists met Captain Rab of the *Mukti Bahini* on the other side of the border. These Press parties and arranged contacts helped the Press a great deal in presenting the issues involved in Bangladesh, along with the distressing refugee situation in India. Throughout this period, the BSF and the Indian Army PR Departments had been helping a large number of internationally reputed correspondents to visit border points from where they were taken inside Bangladesh by the representatives of that government. This was another proof of the excellent rapport in the field of public relations between India and Bangladesh during this critical period. The Government of Bangladesh received a sympathetic and wide Press coverage largely because of the efforts of some imaginative officers who acted boldly and gave the maximum facilities to the Press. The Press itself rose to great heights and showed tact, courage, initiative and boldness on a number of occasions.

Dhar's assertion in public that he had several meetings with the Bangladesh leaders in Mujibnagar broke the ice. There was a spate of visitors to Mujibnagar. In fact, the dateline, Mujibnagar, was very handy for everybody. There were many international leaders who had the privilege of such meetings with the Bangladesh leaders in Mujibnagar. Among them were Edward Kennedy, Donald Chaseworth, John Stonehouse and Peter Shore, not



to speak of very senior newspapermen of *Le Monde* and *Newsweek*.

It was a complex situation. Initially, the Bangladesh leaders had been reluctant to meet anybody from outside. The Mujibnagar dateline enabled them to meet and exchange views with a number of people who wanted to and did help the Bangladesh movement in their personal and official capacities. Even film and television cameramen—only those who were recommended by the Indian or Bangladesh leaders—visited them. Mujibnagar was once plunged into darkness when one such team fiddled with the electric wires to fix their cameras. A German television team which had no access inside Mujibnagar filmed it from outside.

It is an interesting point of international law whether the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh had the status of an *emigre* government or whether it was a parallel government. However, because of India's help and support, there was no doubt that the Government of Bangladesh was able to function effectively. The Bangladesh Mission in Calcutta was the nerve centre of external relations, including relations with India. The defections of Bengali diplomats and non-diplomats abroad were announced from this Mission as was the news of important developments.

Not that everything moved smoothly. The Foreign Office, located at the Bangladesh Mission, became somewhat exclusive. It was alleged that officers were discouraged from keeping contact with the Bangladesh Cabinet and that files of the Foreign Ministry were not sent to the Prime Minister. The climax came when Hussain Ali declared himself the High Commissioner for Bangladesh in India; this was taken exception to by the Bangladesh Prime Minister and the Cabinet. It did sound premature since Bangladesh had not joined the Commonwealth and Ali had no right to the appellation of High Commissioner.

Kamaruzzaman was the most mobile member of the Cabinet who constantly toured the border areas and was very frequently seen and heard in Calcutta even in areas where his presence caused security problems. The most sought after and the most elusive Minister was Captain Mansoor Ali (Finance). There were endless requests to him for financial assistance. Though the Minister in charge of Relief was Kamaruzzaman, Captain Mansoor Ali controlled the purse.

It was a pitiable sight to see people belonging mostly to the middle class roaming aimlessly in search of help. It must be said that the people of West Bengal rose to great heights on this occasion. Many shared their small homes with strangers from Bangladesh and many gave them money and assistance. The people in border areas in particular suffered a lot but withstood it heroically. All schools and colleges housed refugees and were therefore closed; local hospitals could not treat the local population for months together; there was stench and unsanitary conditions in the camps; prices of essential commodities were on the rise; cheap refugee labour was creating competition for local labour; and people themselves deserving relief, watched free rations being given to the refugees. Yet there was no bitterness and very little tension, much to the disappointment of some foreign correspondents who were nosing around for signs of social tensions.

Doctors, teachers, writers and students tried their best to help their counterparts from across the border. This is not to suggest that Indians did whatever was required to be done. They could have done much more and should have. Here were people who had left behind their future. They did not know what had happened to their parents, children and friends. Some of them had come out even without a change of clothes and did not know anybody on this side of the border. They were shattered mentally and physically. They deserved all help. Indians gave some.

However, it hurt when unkind references were made to our inadequacies by people who were better off than most of their countrymen. Their prosperous living conditions in East Pakistan were occasionally referred to, perhaps to embarrass the hosts. That was needless. The hosts knew their own limitations and were already embarrassed. Sometimes they shrugged off the uncharitable remarks, sometimes they did not. Sometimes complaints were met by counter-complaints. When inconveniences of Calcutta life were referred to, cruel remarks were made about conditions in the refugee camps where these people really belonged. In fact, if social tensions developed it was among the middle class who pride themselves on being intellectuals. The common people on both sides of the border had taken things philosophically.

To come back to the so-called Indian pressure for a National

that country touched every Indian heart, particularly those who had borne the brunt of Muslim League fanaticism which had led to the division of the country. If we could not hold back history, then, through strange vicissitudes, it had come a full circle and brought us back to the original crossroads position. All of us felt nostalgic and who would feel so more than Mrs Gandhi.

For the Bengalis on this side of the border, it was a traumatic experience almost like the reunion of two brothers or the return of the prodigal. Forgotten was all the bitterness of partition, the sad days of trek and torture and the weary days of destitution in search of rehabilitation. Thousands went on a pilgrimage to Bangladesh, thousands begged the BSF to allow them to "step on the other side and touch the soil." The border land affected many people in many ways. Raj Narain, MP, created quite a scene at Petrapole trying to cross over to Bangladesh and once he was allowed to cross, it was a difficult job to get him back.

Old Calcuttans sought their old associations and there was much handshaking and embracing. An old man was found near the Calcutta University looking at the matchbox structure (which had replaced the Gothic columns) plastered with violent incentives to kill. Tears streamed down his cheeks. He said: "I was a student here." He did not explain why he was weeping—whether it was in memory of the days past or at the sight of the present structural monstrosity. Maulana Bhasani, passing through Kalighat, asked to be stopped near the Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das Memorial. He kept his head bowed for a long time inside the car, and suddenly, as if roused from a trance, told the driver to proceed. Throughout the journey, the old man did not utter a single word. A Bengali writer told me: "Yahya is the best thing we could have. But for him, how could I have met this man?" he asked, embracing a beaming Muslim writer of Bangladesh.

With all this spontaneous outburst of feelings therefore, it hurt when some intelligent people on either side, far from responding to impulses of the heart, could exchange unpleasanties. I even heard it being said that the Indo-Soviet Treaty had thrown the Bengalis (of Bangladesh) down the drain. Conceding their freedom to say anything they liked in a free country like India, one wonders how a treaty of friendship between two

countries could produce such reactions in a friendly third country unless the Indian motive was suspect.

The suggestion for a coalition government which came not from India but from the non-Awami League parties was not received kindly and the Indian motive was suspect. Endless discussions went on with D.P. Dhar on the one hand and with Bangladesh leaders on the other. Gradually a consensus was arrived at. There would be an all-party Advisory Council which would have representatives from the Awami League, the NAP (Bhasani) the NAP (Wali-Muzaffar), the Communist Party of Bangladesh and the Bangladesh National Congress. Dhar, it was alleged, also insisted on a Hindu Minister in the Bangladesh Cabinet to reflect the secular character of that government. (No responsible person has, however, confirmed this.)

The first meeting of the all-party Advisory Committee met at Mujibnagar in October. Maulana Bhasani (NAP), Muzaffar Hussain (NAP), Moni Singh (Communist Party) and Manoranjan Dhar (Congress) attended besides Tajuddin Ahmed, Khondkar Mushtaq Ahmed, Captain Mansur Ali, A.H. Kamaruzzaman (all Cabinet Ministers) and Abdus Samad Azad of the Awami League. They took a number of decisions. However, apart from its composition, there was not much of interest in its working since it was only an advisory body. The meeting lasted till midnight. The publicity department of the Bangladesh Government had by now been organised and a photograph of the meeting was released to the Press the same night. A second meeting took place later which achieved nothing. Maulana Bhasani did not even attend the second meeting.

Those studying the trends in the Cabinet noticed the inclusion of Abdus Samad Azad with more than academic interest. Azad had earlier gone to the World Peace Conference in April as a Bangladesh delegate and had spoken forcefully against Pakistan. Later he went to the United Nations. It was evident that he was an up and coming man in Bangladesh. His presence in the Advisory Committee indicated the same. He became the Foreign Minister and replaced Khondkar Mushtaq Ahmed.

In the Cabinet itself, reference was made to the clandestine approaches by US agents. It is not generally appreciated that all governments were interested in the Bangladesh development.

Friends and foes, they could not afford to remain indifferent. The Americans must have gathered such information as was relevant from sources which they considered reliable. The USSR must have done so. All other countries must have done so. As a matter of fact, India herself made available to them a lot of information. The Prime Minister's tour abroad (as also the tours of many Cabinet Ministers) was undertaken only for that purpose.

If the Bangladesh situation was going in favour of Pakistan there was no reason why friendly countries would alienate it by trying to prevent the liquidation of millions of Bengalis. We have seen such diplomatic inaction when the situation, according to a country's assessment, demanded it.

The foreign governments' intelligence machines are quite elaborate and not confined to the embassies or consulates. They have many contacts and are quite lavish in spending money and distributing patronage. Compared to that, India suffered from two serious drawbacks.

First, our security measures were quite laughable. It is a miracle that nothing untoward happened to the Bangladesh leaders. Secondly, our intelligence efforts were quite poor. For both we have the obvious excuse of a "paucity of funds." This, no doubt, is partly true. At the same time, the calibre of our intelligence men is reflected in the quality of their intelligence. It is an open secret that newspaper reports are rehashed and presented as grade "A" intelligence material. To give an example, every now and then we used to get alarming reports of a Chinese military presence in East Pakistan. Yet, after the final victory (and even before) there was no evidence of any large-scale Chinese military presence. The Bengali officers of the EBR who joined the liberation war (and were only too glad to share with friends whatever military intelligence they had) did not confirm these reports either. The strength of the Pakistan Army and that of the Pakistan Air Force was highly exaggerated.

After the victory, I had occasion to talk to some people connected with the Tejgaon airport. Even they were unable to describe with any accuracy the types of planes handled by the airport. I wonder how many of our "intelligence" boys have any knowledge of the various types of aircraft; nor can we expect

much from poorly paid and untrained intelligence agents. They have intelligence enough to know what their superiors want and they feed them that type of information. That Pakistan was armed to the hilt and that several tank squadrons had been mobilised are the kind of reports that our intelligence organisations love to have and they got them in plenty. How many, for example, pondered on whether East Pakistan was a "tankable" country or not?

Intelligence agents are lone wolves; information gathered from all sources is supposed to be collated, sifted and graded. In this country, as in Pakistan, the intelligence "agents" have evolved a system of mutual consultation so that none need contradict the other. In some cases, one man works as the agent of more than one intelligence agency without anybody's knowledge and for his exclusive benefit. General Yahya Khan wanted a particular kind of intelligence and he got it to his immediate satisfaction, even if it led to his ultimate doom. We wanted a particular kind of information and we got it in plenty, but not the truth. Which intelligence agency can swear on the basis of records today that they had information about the explosive situation developing in East Pakistan?

The Americans are more thorough. In the case of Bangladesh, they did make every effort to find out the real situation and more so, the "thinking" in the Bangladesh political circles. The published documents gave only a partial account. They were right in sensing that there must be other views. Some of the Bangladesh leaders in their private conversations held the view that India was too weak to take a bold decision to fight Pakistan on the Bangladesh issue, particularly because of the Chinese threat. The USSR, according to them, was not interested in losing Pakistan and would not do anything which might lead to the disintegration of that country. The only hope of Bangladesh was the USA which could exert political, military and economic pressure on Pakistan, forcing it to concede autonomy within the framework of Pakistan. It will not be surprising if the Americans reacted to this idea favourably and made contacts with these circles. This should not upset anyone. We can, however, legitimately feel upset by a suggestion made by quite responsible Bangladesh circles that India was trying to foist a political

settlement on the people of Bangladesh "within the framework of Pakistan." In actual fact, the idea was mooted by certain sections among themselves.

For India, the course was clear. For the cause of democracy, nationalism and secularism, for the return of the ten million refugees and for the *Mukti Bahini* fighting a desperate battle, India was committed to the liberation of Bangladesh. Not by declaring a war on Pakistan but by helping the *Mukti Bahini* in their war. India was doing her bit and she expected the world to supplement her efforts.

The Americans got this message through normal channels; but their intelligence might have fed them another which in its turn might have convinced them that India would not do anything drastic. While in the political field contacts might have been established by the Americans, what caused greater concern to the Bangladesh Cabinet was the reported CIA infiltration in the ranks of the *Mukti Bahini*, particularly among the Sector Commanders. As it is, the Awami League looked askance at the formation of *Mujib Bahini* and the NAP cadres.

Whether they were brainwashed or not, the Sector Commanders did not betray the cause of Bangladesh during the war though there were suspicions. The arrest of Major Jalil (Khulna sector) in the later days may not be unrelated to this suspicion. Colonel Osmani in particular was concerned over the implications of infiltration and rightly so. He wanted no let-up in the war effort. Already he was under a severe strain physically and mentally. He was not satisfied with certain modes of the war operations and sometimes he brought the issues to a head. Nor can it be said that some Awami League leaders did not feel uneasy over the growing strength of the *Mukti Bahini*, the freedom fighters and their commanders. On the part of the *Mukti Bahini* not all felt charitably disposed towards the politicians who, according to them, lived in idle luxury.

The Awami League politicians had no future once they were in the grip of the Yahya regime. Under duress, they would have been made to form a "popular" government based on a "popular" constitution. The freedom of Bangladesh would have been deferred by decades. Yahya's main failure was not to catch them while the catching was good. One cannot hold the Awami

League leaders responsible for running while the running was good. The one thing that was exercising each mind was the fear of a stalemate.

The monsoon months gave the freedom fighters some success and greater confidence. An amused leader tells me that as he was moving about in an FF (freedom fighters) camp in the Mymensingh sector, he saw two boys bringing in two sacks. On enquiry, the boys just said, "Mines" as they threw the heavy sacks almost at his feet. He jumped in alarm but the boys were not perturbed. "We have taken away the fuse. Tonight, we will go near the enemy camp and lay these mines again, properly fused on enemy grounds...." There were accounts of jumping on the enemy sentry in a trench, ambushes and sniping. They were veterans now and knew that the enemy should be harassed rather than faced. It was a guerrilla battle in the conventional style. All usual tactics were employed like hit and run, booby traps and sabotage.

The only field which the Bengali fighters or rather their political organisers did not explore was the psychological one. It is true that constant pressure had kept the Pakistan Army on tenterhooks night and day. But there was enough scope to hit them psychologically.

This the Free Bangladesh Radio failed miserably to do. There were patriotic songs galore. Learned discourses on the aetiology of the revolution were heard frequently. News (with fantastic claims of success) was broadcast thrice. There was even an English programme presented by an announcer with an Oxford drawl. All this was for the benefit of those who had already been convinced in Bangladesh and in India.

It took them a few months to find one or two Urdu-speaking news and commentary readers, but till the last day there was none in Pushtu or in Punjabi.

There were about a million Pakistani troops and over two million non-Bengalis in Bangladesh and all that Free Bangladesh Radio had to offer to them was war news in Urdu which sounded mendacious even to Bengali listeners. Publications brought out by the political parties were being sold in Calcutta. If the fighters could throw grenades at the enemy camp why could not they throw a bundle of Urdu pamphlets? Why could not they mail them? This would have hardly reformed the brutes but the



demoralised ones would have been further demoralised. The Bangladesh people took help from India in many fields. Why didn't they take some help in propaganda? I am told that some help was given, perhaps unsolicited.

I was offered a smoke by a Bangladesh leader in Calcutta. He also produced a matchbox. There was a cartoon on it showing a fleeing Pakistani soldier chased by *Mukti* soldiers. He said that the matchbox had been produced by some friends for distribution in Bangladesh. He used the last stick and threw the matchbox away. Good for him and good for Bangladesh. At least one innocent user of a matchbox in Bangladesh had been spared.

In one of the *Mukti* camps, I saw a bundle of blue papers. I saw that it was a group photograph of General Tikka Khan enjoying a joke with some Chinese leaders. A *Mukti* soldier remarked wryly: "Our friends want us to fight China too!"

D.P. Dhar's visit to Mujibnagar was followed by a spate of visitors. Someone connected with Free Bangladesh Radio told me that the visitors included some publicity experts. Neither side received much benefit. A.I.R. Calcutta, however, kept up the tempo of war and popular feelings. Some very imaginative programmes were broadcast from this station.

Some groundwork was prepared for planning. The Bangladesh Government set up a planning cell with several economists and educationists. Since the extent of ravages was not known, many considered it unreal. It also served another purpose. At least some men could be employed on projects dear to their hearts connected with research and reportage. Some attempt had also been made to regularise trade and commerce. Since all the jute mills were controlled by the Pakistan Army, the Bangladesh Government wanted the cultivators not to produce jute and suggested that whatever was produced should be diverted to India. Throughout this period, there was a lot of confusion in the jute trade with growers getting very little price for their commodity which they brought to India at considerable risk.

Discussing the situation prevailing at that time, a knowledgeable Bangladesh leader told me: "The difficulty was that there were too many agencies and too many people to deal with. Most of them were cautious and tried to get things approved, they would shudder at irregularities. In the beginning also, there were

innumerable problems, administrative, political and human. There was only one organisation—the BSF—and it tackled everything with speed and efficiency and sometimes blunderingly too. But they were not afraid. In an emergency one cannot be afraid.”

A senior BSF officer told me: “It is a new force. Our inexperience perhaps helped us. You know, some blessed people rush in where angels fear to tread.” For example, early in May the BSF opened several *Haats* (markets) in the border areas so that the people of Bangladesh could not only sell their products and purchase essential commodities. Though on a limited scale, these were of great help.

The fear of a stalemate was the most inhibiting factor. I heard responsible persons refer to the situation as another Dalai Lama episode. Most were sure that the ten million refugees who had come would remain, at least the Hindus would, as a permanent liability. It was also darkly predicted that the Bangladesh leaders would come to a settlement with Pakistan. In effect, there was a crisis of confidence. While Bangladesh leaders were feeling that India was losing interest, some Indian leaders felt that the Bangladesh leaders had failed to lead the 75 million people in total revolt.

Mohammed Ali on the side of Bangladesh, and Mrs Gandhi on the side of India, were towers of strength in this period of doubt. There was an excellent rapport between the two and whatever depression the former felt would give way to bright optimism each time he visited Delhi. Many difficulties were cropping up here and there but Mrs Gandhi swept them aside and went out of her way to help the Bangladesh leaders.

Some time in October, further recruitment to the *Mukti Bahini* was stopped. This was interpreted by some as the beginning of the end. Those who knew more suspected more. The Pakistani troops had been desperately attacking the *Mukti* positions with heavy artillery shells. Sometimes they aimed at Indian positions too.

The first attack on an Indian outpost came at Killapara (Assam-Meghalaya) in May 1971. Nine BSF personnel were killed in this encounter. There were sporadic attacks on many border points like Sutarkandi (Assam), Sabrum (Tripura),

Ghojadanga, Boyra, Sikarpur, Betai, Balurghat, Hili and Haldibari (all in West Bengal). It was left to the BSF to return the fire and silence the Pakistani guns for a few months. They did it with singular success, even destroying an enemy gunboat which had ventured into Indian waters in the Sunderbans area. The intensity of the Pakistani attacks increased every day, sometimes they used 25 pounder guns causing a lot of damage. The heaviest weapon with the BSF was three inch mortars. The situation was getting hot everyday with the Pakistani troops taking up aggressive postures.

The situation was countered in two ways. First, some howitzers and artillery pieces were given to the BSF. Secondly, wherever the situation demanded, the Indian Army moved in with their heavy weapons spreading a protective umbrella over the threatened border region. Both these steps were great morale boosters for the Bangladesh fighters who had by now organised themselves very well. They had developed an intelligence network as well as a communication system and the harassed Pakistani troops, isolated in penny packets, did not know which way to run.

The most significant development during this period occurred in the last week of November when the Pakistan Army mobilised a squadron of tanks at Chowagacha. This was very close to the border and an aggressive manoeuvre. The Indian Army hit them before they knew what hit them. Having knocked out the teeth of the aggressor, the Indian tanks moved back to their base. Three Pakistani Sabres were also shot down in aerial combat when they tried to strafe Indian tanks as they were returning to their bases. This tank and air battle taught the Pakistan Army the most important lesson. If provoked, India would retaliate. India had started retaliating.

When this became clear, the whole concept of strategy changed. Pakistan could no longer dare keep her forces in penny packets strewn all along the border. They had to be brought back to safe, consolidated positions. It is not known exactly when the order for regrouping was issued but perhaps the first indication of a change was when suddenly the Pakistanis packed up and vacated Basantapur, Debhata and Kaliganj outposts in the Khulna sector. As the local residents saw it, suddenly some trucks

arrived and the troops started loading up. "They made us do it, for once we were very glad to do it," a Kaliganj merchant told me. This was on 21 November 1971.

The freedom fighters under Captain Nurul Huda, who were hovering near, lost no time in establishing their control over the abandoned areas. In fact, there was an exchange of fire with the retreating Pakistani troops. On each housetop again fluttered a *Joi Bangla* flag reminiscent of the Mujib days of March. Freedom had come.

Kamaruzzaman, the Home and Relief Minister, visited the area in November accompanied by Amirul Islam, MNA, Khaliq (then IG, Police) and a host of Indian journalists and photographers. They received a rousing reception.

The Pakistani troops had withdrawn to Satkhira point, about 25 miles away. The one question uppermost in many minds was whether the Pakistani troops might come back. Khaliq was enquiring from each man. The general consensus was that the troops would, rather than thin out, remain concentrated at chosen points. The freedom fighters were quick to understand this strategy. They moved in, laying siege, poised for attack and ready to run and regroup, in case of counter-attack. The local people, cowed down by the Army so long, welcomed the freedom fighters who were armed to the hilt.

Mohammed Ali, who had carried on his work with great sincerity, was now feeling the strain. He had constant visitors and endless meetings. The great responsibility shouldered by him would have crushed a lesser man but, except for an occasionally frayed temper, he was a solid rock of strength. There were desperate men seeking his counsel, self-seekers pestering him for patronage and self-appointed advisers. Even under the most burdensome strain, he managed a smile of welcome for everybody. Often he would lament: "Look, we are men of action. We want to go out and work. Yet, we have been chained to this life of empty gabble. I am always surrounded. At the end of the day I feel I have done precious little." He was wrong. It was no mean achievement to coordinate all problems, to make contacts and ensure smooth operation. He did all that.

If December 3 was the day of relief from tension for millions of Bengalis when the combined liberation forces of India and

Bangladesh marched in following the declaration of war by Pakistan, December 6 was the day of emotion for all of them. India had recognised Bangladesh.

At Mujibnagar, Mohammed Ali sat on his wooden chair with tears streaming down his cheeks. Flowers and garlands from numerous friends smothered all the files on the small table. He could not speak. He would clasp an extended hand looking on silently with tears in his eyes. He would embrace a friend, his hands gently stroking the friend's head or back in silent blessing. He would bring out his handkerchief from his pocket to wipe off his tears, and put a smile on his pale lips. All the strains of the last months showed clearly on his face. He had spent his lonely, crowded days heroically. He had promised that he would not enjoy family life as long as the war lasted. He had kept his promise. His wrist watch had always kept Bangladesh time.

On December 16, the Pakistan Army in Bangladesh surrendered. On December 21, Mohammed Ali boarded a plane at Dum Dum at 3.30 P.M. The plane reached Dacca 40 minutes later and Tajuddin Ahmed emerged from the plane. With him were Syed Nazrul Islam, (Acting President), Khondkar Mushtaq Ahmed (Foreign Minister), Captain Mansoor Ali (Finance Minister), and Kamaruzzaman (Home and Relief Minister).

Mohammed Ali's mission was over. Tajuddin Ahmed had arrived. Rahmat Ali, who can now be identified as Amirul Islam, reached Dacca a few days later.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Militarism and Muslim Politics

Tajuddin Ahmed, still Prime Minister of Bangladesh, told me at Dacca on January 12: "Please wait for the most important announcement within a day or two." What was coming was an open secret to foreign correspondents at Dacca—Bangladesh was going to be a democracy. Within 72 hours Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the uniting force in Bangladesh was sworn in as the Prime Minister of the newly born country—an experiment which the founding fathers of Pakistan had failed to succeed in. Explaining the move, Tajuddin Ahmed told me: "If Mohammed Ali Jinnah had decided to become the Prime Minister of Pakistan, instead of its Governor-General, military dictatorship would never have sprouted in Pakistan. It took 23 years to rectify Jinnah's mistake and that too, through the break-up of Pakistan. We are not going to commit the same mistake of making the most powerful man the President of Bangladesh; we have had enough of a President-dictator; we want Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the Prime Minister."

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was released after 280 days in prison, and his statements in London and New Delhi, *en route* to Dacca, brought new hopes, though not without some reservations. The atmosphere was very uncertain. Those who had been running the Bangladesh Government so long were sure where they would stand with the Sheikh in power. His mettle had been tested in opposition; but he had never known power. But the Sheikh allayed their fears. A highly emotional man, he had wanted to retire like Gandhi at one stage, then he suggested that he should be the titular head of the new State. Ultimately, however,

he agreed to become the Prime Minister of the new country.

Before we discuss whether dictatorship in Bangladesh has been successfully eradicated by the leaders of the Awami League, let us examine the background of Pakistan which has been festooned with a chain of dictators in its 23 years of existence, a political set-up in which even a popular constitution could not be drafted to ensure the working of a popular government.

Mohammed Ali Jinnah joined the Muslim League seven years after its formation in Dacca on 30 December 1906. The Nawab of Dacca moved the resolution to form the All India Muslim League. Nawab Vagar-ul-Mulk presided over the meeting. One fundamental thing should be borne in mind: the All India Muslim League was formed by the Muslim landed aristocracy to get concessions from the British after displacing the Hindu *zamindars* from imperial favour. Progressive Muslim groups led by Fazlul Haq and others on the other hand sought the political emancipation of the Muslims. That is why the Aligarh school of Muslim thinking was not unhappy over the annulment of the partition of Bengal, whereas the Bengali Muslims were extremely sore. The leaders in Aligarh knew that bigger concessions for the Muslims in India were to come.

This was brought out in the open by Fazlul Haq in 1941 in the Bengal Legislative Assembly where he even threatened to break away. In fact, Muslim leadership in Bengal gradually went to the educated elite, whereas leadership in northern and western India rested with "the nobles, the landed aristocracy and the titled gentlemen" of the Simla Deputation vintage. Mohammed Ali Jinnah was too deft a politician to lose sight of it. He was aware of Lord Minto's statement in the House of Lords in 1912 when he said: "We told the Muslims that partition was a settled fact. We assured the Muslim population of East Bengal of our appreciation of their loyalty and determination to safeguard their interests." Lord Minto was deploring the British betrayal of the Bengali Muslims. Jinnah, who wanted to carve a niche for himself in Muslim politics was aware that a separate homeland for the Muslims might not be difficult to obtain.

After the collapse of the Khilafat movement in 1924 Jinnah felt that the nationalist movement and the interests of the Muslims in India were not incompatible. In 1927, Jinnah also

and took no notice of it during their discussion of the electoral system. But the students doggedly pursued the idea and two years later four of them—Chaudhuri Rahamat Ali, Mohammad Aslam Khan, Mohammad Sadiq and Inayatullah Khan—circulated a four-page leaflet from Cambridge, in January 1933, at the time of the Third Round Table Conference saying that while Sir Iqbal proposed the amalgamation of the four Muslim provinces into a single State forming a unit of the all-India federation, we propose that these provinces should have a separate federation of their own

Bengal did not figure in the picture of the All India Muslim League until 1937 when A.K. Fazlul Haq emerged as the undisputed leader in Bengal with his Krishak Proja Party. A down-to-earth and hard-headed Muslim leader, Fazlul Haq was a non-communal Muslim leader though the unhappy coalition in his Ministry in Bengal had forced him to lean on the communal League. To save his Ministry, Fazlul Haq became the President of both the Muslim League and the Krishak Proja Party in Bengal. He also toured the different provinces in India to collect evidence of "Hindu injustice" against the Muslims. This led to intense communal bitterness which in later stages engulfed the subcontinent. Jinnah came to an understanding with the Unionist Party in the Punjab and, after ousting Fazlul Haq, became the unchallenged leader of the Muslim League.

It is necessary to understand the man to explain the subsequent developments in Pakistan. Shady manoeuvres and jockeying for power are common enough in politics, but Jinnah brought into operation a certain amount of ruthlessness and dictatorial design which foretold the shape of things to come in the future Pakistan.

To analyse the attitude of the Muslim leaders towards the Indian Army we shall go back a bit. Even during the Mughal rule the army was the main prop on which the empire rested. The British borrowed this imperial Mughal concept and Jinnah, who was responsible for parity among the Hindus and the Muslims in recruitment to the army suffered from the inhibition that the army should always be relied upon in case of crisis. Let us look at the three arms of Mughal rule and what became of them under the British. The first, criminal justice, had in Mughal times been



a Muslim preserve. Under the British, the legal system had very largely been taken over by caste Hindus. The second was the treasury which had been largely Hindu under the Mughals, and Hindu it remained. The third arm was the army. The Mughal Army had been mainly Muslim, with some Hindu contingents like the Rajputs and the Jats; and though the Muslims had nearly lost one arm of government to the Hindus, they had retained their strength in the army. Right up to the 20th Century, the Muslims formed half its strength. As the remainder included Sikhs, Gurkhas and southern Christians, it will be seen that Muslims were a more important component than Hindus. After the bestowal of King's Commissions upon Indians in 1918, Muslims secured a fair proportion of places, and held their own in advancement to senior ranks. All this was the British way of atoning for the "betrayal" of Muslims.

The lawyers and the landed gentry in the Muslim League seldom mentioned the army, but deep down, they recognised that here was the biggest guarantee of Muslim rights against Congress-Hindu domination. The Congress constantly attacked military expenditure and demanded the reduction of the army. The Muslim League, on the other hand, always supported the expansion of the Indian Army and pressed for a fair and proportional representation of the Muslims in it. During the enormous expansion of the Indian Army in the Second World War, the Muslims retained their traditional strength; a large number of Bengali Muslims were enlisted for the first time in motor transport, as well as in the new Indian Navy.

Jinnah was able to obtain parity for the Muslim League with the Congress largely because the Muslims actually enjoyed parity in the wartime army. The partition of the country necessitated the division of the Indian Army. If Pakistan's population had a non-Muslim minority, the Pakistan Army was wholly Muslim. Though the exchange of populations was almost complete in West Pakistan, a large number of Hindus remained in East Pakistan. Thus the idea of a religious crusade (Jehad) found ready support from the army in Pakistan.

It is difficult to determine to what extent Jinnah as Governor-General was responsible for the autocratic rule that followed in subsequent years, but it is certain that the leaders who assumed

power after his death inherited the idea of a theocratic State and pampered army from him. Another reason perhaps is the peculiarity of the administrative pattern in the north-west. The The North-West Frontier Province, Baluchistan and Sind had been administered by regular army officers as a special exigency in "non-regulation" areas. Naturally the presence of a military man in the government caused no raised eyebrows in West Pakistan. From Peshawar to Quetta every civilian headquarter used to be flanked by a sort of army cantonment.

Another interesting factor is the large number of Punjabis in the Pakistan Army. They comprise more than 95 per cent of the other ranks and over 80 per cent of the officers. And coming from the landed gentry and elites of West Pakistan, the army, from the time of partition, became the major pressure group in Pakistani politics. Jinnah had very little time to consolidate his position as he died within two years of the birth of Pakistan. Khawaza Nazimuddin then became the Governor-General of Pakistan. Unfortunately, he lacked Jinnah's charisma and power. As expected, the Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, assumed all powers. But he too was not sure of his base in East Pakistan and to gain control of the Muslim League he combined the offices of Prime Minister and party boss to suit his own interests. Meanwhile, Maulana Bhasani had left the Muslim League and formed his Awami Muslim League.

The situation in East Pakistan was aggravated by the nomination of Nurul Amin as Chief Minister by Khawaza Nazimuddin though he was not a nominee of the Provincial Muslim League. On the other hand, the two stalwarts in Bengal, H.S. Suhrawardy and Fazlul Haq, were kept out of office. Meanwhile, the language issue became the main irritant when Khawaza Nazimuddin and his nominee, Nurul Amin, as Chief Minister in East Pakistan sought to impose Urdu as the national language of Pakistan. The flash-point was reached on 20 February 1952. The doggedness with which the Central Government of Pakistan pressed for Urdu clearly indicated that the bureaucrats had taken over. In fact, after the assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan, which still remains a mystery, Khawaza Nazimuddin took over as Prime Minister and the Finance Minister, Ghulam Mohammad, became the Governor-General. This is the first induction of bureaucracy to

the highest office in Pakistan.

The first step towards militarism in Pakistan was taken by Governor-General Ghulam Mohammad when he dismissed the Nazimuddin Cabinet on 17 April 1953. He took advantage of the confused political situation created by the rivalry between Nurul Amin and Mian Mumtaz Daulatana of Punjab. Strangely enough, at that time there was only one Bengali in the Central Civil Service of Pakistan and the members from Bengal started voicing their fear that Punjab wanted to dominate the administration and the army, ignoring East Pakistan. Indeed, as far back as 1950, Nur Ahmed, a member from East Pakistan in the Constituent Assembly had expressed the fear that moves were afoot which, if successful, would reduce the majority province to a minority one and make a colony out of East Pakistan. That Ghulam Mohammad had brought the army into politics was General Ayub Khan's disclosure in an interview after the military coup. We have to depend on Ayub Khan's testimony since Ghulam Mohammad is dead, but it is clear that the army had been itching for power and had little interest in the country. Iskander Mirza's take over as the Governor-General brought dictatorship closer. Though Iskander Mirza was the man at least formally responsible for the military coup in Pakistan, Ghulam Mohammad was the man who had paved the way to it. The failure of the Punjabi clique to push Mohammad Ali of Bogra into East Pakistani politics after the dismissal of Feroze Khan Noon perhaps decided the final outcome. The Fazlul Haq Ministry was dissolved and he was branded a traitor, Suhrawardy was branded provincialist and the war of attrition against the Bengali politicians was on.

What Ghulam Mohammad had not foreseen was that in the war of nerves against the politicians by the bureaucracy, the bureaucracy itself was losing fast and the army was lying in ambush to strike at the moment of its choosing. When H.S. Suhrawardy came to power following a secret deal in Zurich where he was supposed to be recuperating from a well publicised illness, the army was in full control of the situation. Two years later, when Suhrawardy was accused by Maulana Bhasani at the Kagmari Convention of the Awami League of inveigling Pakistan into signing the CENTO and SEATO pacts, he replied that as Prime

Minister only in name, he had hardly seen the agreements. Though definite proof is difficult to obtain, it is common knowledge in Pakistan that the military pact with the United States during the Dulles era was initiated and given effect to by the pressure group in the army in spite of reservations by the politicians and the Awami League whose leader, Suhrawardy, was then the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

At 10.30 p.m. on 7 October 1958, exactly 130 days before the first General Elections in Pakistan were scheduled the lightning struck. Major-General Iskander Mirza, the first President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, issued a proclamation dismissing the Central and Provincial Governments and appointed General Ayub Khan Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and Chief Martial Law Administrator.

Meanwhile, the army was planning quietly. On October 25, Iskander Mirza announced a 12-man Cabinet with General Ayub Khan as Prime Minister and Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto as the Minister of Commerce. In the new Cabinet, out of 12 members four belonged to the Civil Service and three to the army; thus started the dyarchy of the army and the bureaucracy in Pakistan. Nine members of the new Cabinet including General Ayub were sworn in on October 27. On that very night, the last traces of civilian rule in Pakistan were obliterated when three military colleagues of Ayub went to president Mirza at 10 p.m. to inform him on behalf of General Ayub that Mirza had been charged with too much involvement with the politicians and he was held responsible for the "state of affairs" in Pakistan.

The take over was very smooth. Apparently Mirza was told that the charges against him, if brought out in the open, would be too damning. It is ironical that Mirza who in his Pakistan Day message on 14 August 1957 had said: "As your President, I am sworn to implement and defend the constitution and I wish to make it perfectly clear that I shall do so without any other consideration" had to be instrumental in the abrogation of the same constitution in 1958 in collusion with the army. It is known that Mirza as the civilian head of the Ministry of Defence had close relations with Ayub Khan and had witnessed his advancement to power. They were both associated with the political changes brought about by Ghulam Mohammad and

were in London together when the changes were discussed. Ayub accompanied Mirza when he went on a tour of the Middle East. So it was on 27 October 1958, that General Ayub and his associates reached the conclusion that Major-General Iskander Mirza was expendable and the country should be run by the army.

What generally follows a military coup—another coup by other powerful Generals—was also noticed in Pakistan. But Ayub was too fast for them. The removal of General Umrao Khan, Martial Law Administrator and Governor of East Pakistan; the removal of General Musa and other changes brought about by Ayub in the command and structure of the Pakistan Army indicated that he was alive to the possibilities of another coup. Both Azam Khan and Umrao Khan had become “too popular” in East Pakistan and even today, in Bangladesh, intellectuals and bureaucrats admit grudgingly that something was done for East Pakistan during their regime. It is, however, true that after his take over as the President of Pakistan and later as President and Prime Minister, Ayub for a short time followed the policy of appeasement to win over the East wing of the country. Unfortunately for him, in the later stages, he was slowly being supplanted by the powerful clique headed by General Yahya Khan. Bhutto, however, basked in the warmth of every succeeding army caucus and his responsibility for the break-up of Pakistan will one day be objectively assessed.

A combined effort by the Awami League in the East and the People's Party in the West could have buried the military rule with bell, book and candle. But Bhutto chose the easier way of playing second fiddle to General Yahya Khan who lacked the political astuteness of Ayub. After supplanting Ayub, Yahya perhaps fancied himself in the role of a saviour by helping to restore democracy. But military pressure within his own army, and the vested interests of the landed gentry of Punjab—each family with at least one member ensconced in the army command—made it impossible for Yahya to take the steps he desired. When he tried to retract he had already reached the point of no return.

Through the elaborate political farces enacted, the people

of Pakistan never lost their sense of humour. In a country where no Prime Minister had been elected to office and no popular government had been established except the Fazlul Haq ministry in 1954 (dismissed when the ministers were flying to Dacca from Karachi), the people found their own jokes about their leaders each of whom promised them a land flowing with milk and honey. When Ayub Khan took over in a military coup in October 1958 people used to call it "The Great October Revolution." When Ayub Khan said: "My authority is revolution. I have no sanction in law or constitution," the people of Pakistan knew that "here speaketh the dictator." But there was surprisingly no demonstration, no agitation and no statement from the politicians disapproving the coup. Perhaps the reason for this could be found in the fact that despite their harsh opposition to the independence movement in undivided India the British followed a method which though colonial in nature was compatible with the rule of law in a democratic country.

The people of Pakistan were shocked and benumbed by the suddenness of the *coup d'etat*. But what happens in a military coup is that the sanction comes from the citadels of power within the country if it is felt that the coup leaders will last some time. Ayub's first sanction came from the Pakistan Supreme Court which ruled through the Chief Justice of Pakistan that a successful revolution or a *coup d'etat* was an internationally recognised method of changing a constitution. It is, however, clear that even if the Supreme Court had given a full-bench verdict against General Ayub Khan it would have made little difference. Ayub had full control of the administrative machinery and that to the people was the government.

General Ayub Khan had no popular sanction; no more had General Yahya Khan when he threw his predecessor into the gutter. Only, on this occasion, the people could not care less because they had seen musical chairs being played in Pakistan for two decades. They had seen eight Prime Ministers, none elected, three Governors-General and two military dictators. It is not difficult now to see how General Yahya Khan came to power. After the heart attack suffered by Ayub Khan, his pace became slow. Demonstrations and agitations whipped up throughout the country, particularly in West Pakistan by Bhutto

and by Wali Khan in the North-West Frontier Province were eating at his vitals. The other blunder was the framing of the Agartala Conspiracy Case at a time when passions were at their highest. Even if there was truth behind the case, Ayub made a mess of the whole situation. The grudging concessions given to the students in the West to alienate them from Bhutto and agreeing to meet their non-political grievances gave the political leaders the whip hand to force Ayub to sit round a table with them for talks to restore political freedom and democracy with the precondition of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's release from jail. The Sheikh who was offered bail by the martial law administration refused it and the President had no alternative but to release him and save his face by saying that the case against him had not been withdrawn. This displeased both the extremists among the politicians as well as the hawks among the army led by General Yahya Khan. So, quietly, without much fanfare and with a bunch of carrots in one hand and a stick in the other, Yahya entered the political arena to preside over the liquidation of Pakistan.

George Bernard Shaw had not lived to see how Yahya Khan, a dictator *par excellence* was the cause of the end of dictatorship in Pakistan, but he was right when he wrote:

When we see Parliaments like ours kicked into the gutter by dictators, both in kingdoms and republics, it is foolish to watch until the dictator dies or collapses, and then do nothing but pick the poor old things up and try to scrape the mud off them; the only sane course is to take the step by which the dictatorship could have been anticipated and averted....

The people and the leaders of Pakistan failed to do that and paid dearly not only in economic terms but in terms of human lives which the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, estimated at about three million. Democratic people all over the world asked how long the dictatorship would last. When General Ayub Khan, who later promoted himself to Field Marshal, took over, the *Daily Telegraph* wrote: "How far and how long the hundreds of political figures of West and East

Pakistan, the late Central and Provincial Ministers, party chiefs and members of the vast party machines will acquiesce peacefully as it all now is remains to be seen." The people tolerated the Ayub regime for a decade when the dictator brought about his own downfall. But dictatorship still flourished. Ayub's mission had been "to clean" the country of corrupt politicians; General Yahya in his bloodless coup had taken over to give the country a "democracy."

Ayub's coup in 1958 was a deliberate attempt by the ruling Punjabi clique of West Pakistan to keep the people of East Pakistan under iron heels. The Bengali leaders, who were clamouring for regional autonomy by way of striking a new balance of political and economic power between the Centre and the Provinces, became suspect in the eyes of the military rulers. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, then General Secretary of the Awami League; Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani; and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, along with many others, were tucked away in prisons. Ayub promised the removal of disparity but his regime was marked by shameless discrimination. Rebel students in Dacca, Comilla, Bogra, Rajshahi and other places in East Pakistan were put behind bars in thousands. The wave reached West Pakistan also. In 1962, Ayub gave the country a new constitution and made Pakistan a Muslim Republic making all the minorities second class citizens.

When the people rose against the new repression, brutal measures were taken against them. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was arrested on charges of conspiracy with India to overthrow the government and declare the East wing of the country independent. The martial law authorities, however, failed to prove their case. That was in 1968. People protested, widespread unrest rocked the country; the army resorted to brutal repression raising the bogey of Indian interference and seeing "enemy hands" behind every demonstration. Two people were killed in Dacca in police firing on December 7. The army was called out, factories closed as the workers went on strike. Over 1,000 persons were arrested in East Pakistan alone on December 14. Police and the army opened fire against unarmed people. Twenty-five persons were killed in Dacca, Narayanganj and other places. The demand was to release Mujibur Rahman. Ayub had to



yield. A round table conference was planned and Ayub had to suffer the presence of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The round table conference broke down on the issue of regional autonomy. Then came March 25—the fateful day on which General Yahya Khan took over from the ailing Ayub who had become an invalid. Exactly two years later, on 25 March 1971, the army crackdown started and out of the ashes of East Pakistan Bangladesh arose. On 26 March 1969 General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan, the Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army broadcast a speech to the nation. He said:

Fellow countrymen. I wish to make it absolutely clear to you that I have no ambition other than the creation of conditions conducive to the establishment of a constitutional government. It is my firm belief that a sound, clean and honest administration is a prerequisite for sane and constructive political life and for the smooth transfer of power to the representatives of the people elected freely and impartially on the basis of adult franchise. It will be the task of these elected representatives to give the country a workable constitution and find a solution of all other political, economic and social problems that have been agitating the minds of the people. I am, however, conscious of the genuine difficulties and pressing needs of various sections of our society, including the student community, the labour and our peasants. Let me assure you that my administration will make every endeavour to resolve these difficulties.

Either General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan was the most Machiavellian person ever to appear on the political stage of Pakistan or he was a congenital fool to believe that the vested interests in West Pakistan would allow any transfer of power. In every military coup the dictator without any mandate or sanction from the people takes upon himself the task of shaping the destiny of millions in the way he thinks fit. General Yahya Khan was no exception. When, before the army crackdown, he said that he would not allow East Pakistan to secede from the country, he forgot that a majority could never secede from a minority and the destiny of the country should have rested with the elected representatives of the people. From his subsequent

broadcasts and planning, it appears that Yahya Khan was genuinely interested in restoring democracy only "as long as it does not impair national integrity and solidarity of the country." From this it is apparent that the dictator merely wanted to carve out a niche for himself in the history of Pakistan. But at the same time his statement revealed that it was his personal mission to watch over the "integrity and solidarity" of Pakistan. But he made two concessions. He agreed to break the one-unit system in West Pakistan, a measure actually recommended by the National Assembly of Pakistan in 1957. The other was one man, one vote. He also promised East Pakistan parity with the West wing and agreed not only to a division of legislative power but financial power as well.

On 28 November 1969 he said: "The people of East and West Pakistan are bound together by a common historical, cultural and spiritual heritage. There is, therefore, no reason why we should not be able to work out a satisfactory relationship between the Centre and Provinces in Pakistan wherein the people of both wings shall live together as equal and honourable partners."

The elections in Pakistan were due on 5 October 1970 and political activities were allowed from 1 January 1970. But he gave the National Assembly only 120 days to draft a constitution warning the political leaders that the constitution was "sacred," though not of course for the army and implied that a consensus was desirable. But the dismemberment of the one-unit system in West Pakistan created a new situation. The intelligentsia in East Pakistan demanded that East Pakistan should be renamed Bangladesh. On 7 December 1969, the National Awami Party leader, Maulana Bhasani, told a gathering before his departure for Tengail that all the regions in East Pakistan had their new names while Bangladesh alone was labelled East Pakistan. With the dismemberment of the one-unit, all the provinces in West Pakistan would be known by their old names and in view of this situation East Pakistan would be meaningless. The idea of Bangladesh was born.

The general elections, however, did not take place on 5 October 1970 because of a major cyclone in East Pakistan. They were postponed and held on 7 December 1970. The elections were

fought by the Awami League on the much talked about Six-Point Formula based on regional autonomy. In the elections the Awami League secured 167 out of the 169 seats allotted to East Bengal in a National Assembly of 313. Thus the Awami League, by its absolute majority in the National Assembly was the unchallenged representative of the people in the East wing. The prescribed period of 120 days for constitution-making meant that the first session of the National Assembly would be held on 3 March 1971. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman made it very clear that the constitution of Pakistan must be based on the six points of regional autonomy. Apparently these six points were quite legitimate but the West Pakistani leaders saw in this formula the end of their exploitation and domination. If Mujib became the Prime Minister of the country and the constitution was based on the Six-Point Formula, parity between the two wings would not only be maintained but the East wing would be much more benefited as it earned the major share of foreign exchange for the country. And it would also be natural for the Prime Minister to undo the wrong by giving more weightage to East Pakistan and bring the two wings on par economically.

Mujib's proposals were nothing new. These were only a reshaped version of the 1954 demands when Fazlul Haq had become the Prime Minister on a popular vote. The Six-Point Formula was that:

- 1 The Constitution should provide for a federation of Pakistan in the true sense on the basis of the Lahore Resolution and for a Parliamentary form of Government based on the supremacy of a duly elected legislature on the basis of universal adult franchise.
- 2 The Federal Government shall deal with only two subjects—defence and foreign affairs—with all the residuary subjects vested in the federating States.
- 3 There should be either two separate, freely convertible currencies for the two wings or one currency with two separate Reserve Banks to prevent inter-wing flight of capital.
- 4 The power of taxation and revenue collection shall be vested in the federating units. The Federal Government will receive a share to meet its financial obligations.

- 5 Economic disparities between the two wings shall disappear through a series of economic, fiscal, and legal reforms.
- 6 A militia or para-military force must be created in East Pakistan, which at present has no defence of its own.

Pakistan would have remained in one piece today had not Bhutto, backed by the pressure groups in Punjab, created a deadlock by opposing Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's programme. How far Bhutto had played into the hands of the military elites or how far he had persuaded Yahya Khan to throw a spanner into the formation of parliamentary democracy, historians will never know unless one of these two really writes a truthful account of the events that followed the victory of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his Awami League. The result was that Yahya Khan moved in and acted in the interests of the ruling military junta and the bureaucracy of Pakistan. He postponed the session of the National Assembly indefinitely, announcing that serious differences among the political leaders had forced him to take this step. According to Awami League analysts, Yahya depended solely on his military intelligence which had briefed him that the Awami League would never come to power and the resulting political imbalance would allow the army to retain the stranglehold. On the credit side, Yahya will be known as the first ever army man who had willingly given back the people their democracy which they could not maintain. On the debit side was the gamble. Yahya's stakes were high and his ace was Bhutto.

Bhutto was inducted into the first Pakistan martial law Cabinet by Iskander Mirza. Ayub retained him when he took over power. And when he fell from grace he intrigued successfully to ultimately unseat Ayub Khan. The story goes that Ayub was so impressed by Bhutto at a party that he decided to include the young man in his first Cabinet. The truth may be different; Bhutto had plenty of relatives in the army holding the highest ranks to push him up the ladder. From what is known about his antecedents Bhutto must have been a willing piper playing the tune that was called. The postponement of the National Assembly was a denial to the people of East Bengal of the rights won after many years of hardships and struggle. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman led his disgruntled countrymen. He followed the

Gandhian principle of non-cooperation and urged the people to launch a civil disobedience movement to paralyse the government in East Pakistan. The people rose as one man. The army was called in. There were clashes and more than 350 people were killed by the army and over a thousand injured. The people were determined to fight; they had shed blood and were prepared to shed more. Yahya took to a new ruse. He gave the impression that he was balking under pressure but he was really biding for time.

He had only five brigades in East Pakistan at that time; he had to raise the strength to at least 60 battalions so that the Bengalis could be taught a "proper lesson." To gain time, Yahya announced that the National Assembly would meet on 25 March 1971. But Sheikh Mujibur Rahman imposed four conditions for participating in the Assembly deliberations. He asked for: (i) An immediate end of the martial law regime; (ii) withdrawal of troops from East Pakistan; (iii) an enquiry into the killings of the strikers; and (iv) immediate handing over of power to the elected representatives.

Yahya then arrived in Dacca and a series of talks were held between Yahya and Mujib. But the army did not let up. While the talks were on, the martial law administration let loose a reign of terror. Thirty demonstrators were shot down on 19 March 1972 at Jaydevpur. Meanwhile, Yahya had to keep up the pretence of continuing the dialogue and Bhutto and other West Pakistani leaders were summoned to Dacca. An impression was deliberately created that Yahya was ready to accept the idea of "sovereign independent Bengal" as a unit of the confederation of Pakistan. The concept of sovereign independent Bengal or "Bangla" was in keeping with the spirit of the Muslim League's Lahore Resolution of 1940 which had clearly envisaged sovereign autonomous units in Pakistan.

How far was foreign aid and other external factors responsible for developments in East Pakistan. The role of the Communist Party of Pakistan in shaping the political decisions was important though the decisions were forced through under the cover of other parties. Of absorbing interest is the shedding of "Muslim" from the original name of the Awami League as if a tadpole had dropped its tail. Pakistan is the graveyard of many political

parties but in politics also there was a clear distinction between the "rich" West Pakistan and the "peasant" East Pakistan. The West Pakistan political scene was dominated by the influential groups of Pirs, Zamindars, Khans and Nawabs. East Pakistan presented a plebian picture.

The East Pakistan Awami League leaders in the East wing finding themselves always at war with the vested interests in the West, played a major role in the language movement of the province in 1952 and in the defeat of the Muslim League in the 1954 elections by forming electoral alliances with other minor parties. The leaders of the Awami Muslim League knew that party formation on strictly communal lines would be infructuous in Bengal where the Hindus and Muslims had for long lived together peacefully. To the people of East Pakistan, a square meal was more important than politics and the communal riots that took place in East Bengal were caused more often by the refugees from India under the instigation of the extreme right. Secondly, the Awami Muslim League knew that with universal adult franchise Hindu votes would count heavily in deciding the course of politics in Pakistan, and whoever wooed the minority would win the elections. The military rulers of West Pakistan knew this and that is why, during the genocide committed after 25 March 1971, the most common abuse hurled at the Muslims of East Pakistan by the Pakistan Army was "*Hindu-ka-bachcha*" (son of a Hindu). Even in undivided Bengal, the Muslim League was never so flagrantly communal as in other parts of India.

In 1954, the Awami Muslim League became a constituent of the United Front Cabinet in East Bengal but was dismissed by the Central Government after only two months in office. This led to a coalition government with other minor parties and lasted about two years until martial law gagged all political activities in Pakistan. The most noted achievement of the Awami League was made while in opposition by mobilising public opinion against the Muslim League. There was a basic difference between the approach of the Awami League and other political parties in Pakistan. While others thrived on the anti-India bogey, the Awami League harped mainly on regional autonomy. And the concept of Bangladesh was born.

If anyone should be given full credit for creating an effective opposition in East Pakistan or for that matter in Pakistan, it was Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani. Bhasani became known through the peasant movements in the 1930s in Assam and East Bengal. Later in the 1940s he lent his support to the Muslim League. It was under his leadership that the East Pakistan Awami Muslim League was born at Dacca on 23 June 1949. The Muslim League leaders at the Centre did not take to the new party kindly and every effort was made to curb its activities. Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan told a public meeting of the Muslim League at Mymensingh in December 1950: "Pakistan has been achieved by the Muslim League. As long as I am alive no other political party will be allowed to work here." In no democratic country could the Prime Minister have uttered words so dictatorial. Though the Awami League professed to be "progressive" it was as communal as the Muslim League, its membership being restricted only to Muslims till 1955.

There was, however, a sharp division within the Awami Muslim League between the secular and the communal groups. The first draft of the Awami Muslim League manifesto published by the General Secretary, Shamsul Haq clearly stated that the Islamic character of the party should be retained. However, when Haq was taken political prisoner, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman led the secular group within the party to an onslaught against its Islamic character. A.K. Fazlul Haq entered politics with renewed vigour forming his Krishak Shramik Party. Though his personal popularity was great, his party did not do well in the elections and an understanding with Maulana Bhasani enabled Fazlul Haq to form a Ministry. In forging an alliance with Fazlul Haq, Bhasani must have been influenced by the left groups, particularly the Communists, who had been banned and had to work under cover. The unstinted support of the student organisations to the United Front made a big difference. The United Front secured 210 of the 237 Muslim seats in the Provincial assembly and obtained nearly 64 per cent of the votes: The Muslim League got only nine seats and less than 27 per cent of the votes. The most notable casualty was Nurul Amin, the Muslim League Chief Minister.

But the coalition did not work. The first split became apparent

when Suhrawardy and Maulana Bhasani fell out on the issue of the pro-West policy pursued by Suhrawardy as the Prime Minister. The schism came to a head at the Kagmari Conference in 1957. The crisis took a serious turn a few weeks later in March the same year when the Organising Secretary of the Awami League was suspended by the General Secretary, Mujibur Rahman, for his "activities against the party." As a protest, nine members of the Awami League Working Committee resigned. Referring to this period M. Rashiduzzaman writes:

The East Pakistan Awami League Council session held in Dacca was dominated by the followers of Suhrawardy and his foreign policy was approved by more than 700 Awami League Councilors. Maulana Bhasani had earlier submitted his resignation from the Presidentship of the party and came out publicly criticising Suhrawardy's policy. The attitude of Maulana Bhasani and his followers hardened because of the hostility shown by the pro-Suhrawardy group in the Awami League. Earlier, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had proposed an amendment to the party Constitution curbing the powers of the President to nominate all the members of the Working Committee. The semblance of his association with the party was finally severed when Maulana Bhasani resigned from even a primary membership of the EPAL.

The resignation of Bhasani from the party to form the National Awami Party (NAP) was a severe blow to the EPAL. The organisational feud continued between the Secretary, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and the then Chief Minister, Ataur Rahman. Mujibur Rahman resigned from the United Front Ministry to devote more time for organisational work but it was felt, by many in the party, that he was trying "to strengthen his hold over the party." I recollect Ataur Rahman telling me at Calcutta airport when he arrived in Calcutta, that Mujibur was making it impossible for the Ministry to function. There were also charges of corruption against him and also of using government money and machinery to build up the EPAL. The internal conflict took an intense form this time when the Working Committee asked two Ministers of the Awami League to resign from the Ministry. This was an affront to the Chief Minister, Ataur Rahman Khan.



Eventually the Awami League Cabinet collapsed when the NAP decided to oppose it.

With the army coming into power in 1958 all political activities were banned until the new constitution in 1962. The Awami League was revived in 1964 and it supported Miss Fatima Jinnah in the 1964 Presidential elections against Ayub Khan. The 1965 war with India helped the Awami League to get popular support in the 1970 elections. The League pointed out to the electorate that India had no designs against East Pakistan despite what the Muslim League and other rightist parties said. The first attempt to mobilise the Awami League was made in 1966 when the Six-Point Formula was announced and on the basis of this the elections were fought, and won. According to a close associate of Mujibur Rahman, the future of Pakistan was shaped that night when President Ayub Khan, only four days before he was ousted and martial law clamped again by Yahya Khan, asked Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to a dinner. He asked Mujib to modify his demands for regional autonomy. He is reported to have told the Sheikh that he should be contented for the time being with the martial law administration agreeing to the introduction of a parliamentary system and universal adult franchise.

Whether this is true or not is very difficult to gauge as both Ayub and the Sheikh maintain complete silence over it. But Ayub certainly felt that the new pressure group rising within the army would not tolerate the idea of complete regional autonomy to East Pakistan. On the other hand, Mujibur Rahman had gone too far to climb down from his demands. Close associates of Mujib contend that Mujib should have established a rapport with India when the Mujib-Yahya talks started in Dacca and prepared his people with arms for a confrontation. But even the information of secret reinforcement by the army remained unknown to Mujib. In any event, quite a few senior officers of the Bengal Regiment of East Pakistan told me that the Sheikh or his emissaries "never contacted us.... We were already embittered by the discrimination against us by the Punjabis and would have been too glad to join the movement when the crackdown started." But in my opinion not much credence should be given to these comments. The idea of taking sides with the

Awami League against the army would have been too repugnant to these officers.

In fact, the armed struggle was first started by the East Bengal Regiment, the East Pakistan Rifles and the Armed Police when they had been disarmed. The civilians had not yet been asked to take to arms by the Sheikh. The formal contact between the Awami League and men of the Bengal Regiment was established much later, and that too through India's mediation and with the help of some of the political leaders of the Awami League who had fled to India.

Going back to that dinner hosted by Ayub Khan, Mujibur found his comrades adamant on the issue of autonomy and next day submitted draft constitutional amendments to the President, which envisaged a federal parliamentary system with regional autonomy based on the Six-Point Formula of the Awami League. Mujib's position was really unenviable at that time because he was under severe pressure from the SAC (Students' Action Committee) made up with representatives of the East Pakistan Students' Union (aligned with the Awami League) and the Pakistan Students' Union (aligned with the NAP). Ayub was stunned by the Six-Point Formula of the Awami League pressed on him with the Eleven-Point Programme of the SAC. He was also furious when he came to learn that Mujib planned to place before the National Assembly his own draft bill. He was afraid that Rahman's amendment might be carried in the National Assembly with the support of the Sindhi, Bengali, Pathan and Baluch members, as most of them were also against his one-unit plan. Besides, this private bill might have created another stalemate.

There are two versions of the circumstances in which the take over by Yahya was effected. One version says that Ayub who was in failing health handed over power to Yahya stating that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's amendment "would liquidate the Central Government and the army." The other version is that the army was apprehensive that Ayub had become too weak and he could not be trusted with the negotiations any more. After the take over, Yahya announced the date of the elections but announced also the Legal Framework Order which would govern the conduct of the elections. That was the crux of the whole issue. Like the

zealots in politics the army zealots believed firmly that the Awami League was destroying the Muslim character of Pakistan and the people of East Pakistan were not "true believers." So the order declared that the future constitution of Pakistan must preserve five fundamental principles:

- 1 An Islamic ideology;
- 2 territorial integrity;
- 3 free elections and independence of judiciary;
- 4 a federal system ensuring autonomy to the provinces as well as adequate legislative, administrative and financial powers for the Central Government; and
- 5 full cooperation of the people of all regions in national affairs.

The Legal Framework Order stipulated that *if the President refused to authenticate the constitution, the National Assembly would stand dissolved and that he would be the sole arbiter in interpreting the order.* This left Yahya with the authority to guide democracy at his discretion.

The student organisations in East Pakistan were quite powerful and their leftist leanings were pronounced. Not only in 1952 during the Language Movement, but in subsequent movements also, the students played a very important role in the politics of East Pakistan. Even in March 1971, when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was deliberating in his mind whether it would be proper to declare independence, it was the students who forced his hand. Why was the left influence so strong among the students? One of the reasons was that the Communist Party of Pakistan was not allowed to work in the open. The persecution of the Communists in Pakistan, both under the rule of Nurul Amin and under the martial law, forced it to go underground. A Communist leader of Bangladesh told me in his office in Dacca: "At the time of the partition, we had about 18,000 dedicated workers but 25 years' hardship and living underground weighed heavily on us. Today I doubt if I can count even a 1,000 workers. They are either killed, dead, or have fled to India." So the Communists had to work covertly through the NAP students' group and even through

the Awami League. Strangely enough, Pakistan, where the Communists were persecuted most, got the most massive support from China as well as from the Western world. Jyoti Sengupta, a West Bengal journalist writes in his book *The Eclipse of Pakistan*:

....The Communist Party was virtually under a ban since the birth of Pakistan. Hundreds of its workers were in detention or were serving prison terms. Many went underground as there were warrants of arrest pending against them. The Party, no doubt, took part in the elections of 1954 but it had no funds nor could it do any electioneering as its meetings were banned.

The principal reasons for the ban on the Communist Party of Pakistan stem from the subversive activities of the Party during the period between 1947 and 1952 following the Zhadanov line of the International Communist movement. It tried to overthrow the Government of Pakistan and had most active units in Mymensingh under Moni Singh, in Rajshahi under Ila Mitra and a collective leadership organising active units in Barisal. They sought to organise the tribals, peasants and labourers to an uprising against the government. The Pakistan Government also found Communist infiltration in the army. And in the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case of 1953, General Akbar Khan and a number of other officers along with some prominent Communist members, were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment for trying to overthrow the government of Liaquat Ali Khan. Subsequent events made it debatable whether the Communists had a hand in the Rawalpindi attempt to overthrow the government. The strict ban on the Communist Party of Pakistan prevented the formulation of any major movement but there is enough proof that the Communists had been quite active covertly.

Let us probe into the Communist situation in East Pakistan. During the partition more than 10,000 Communists opted for Pakistan. The Communist Party in undivided Bengal can trace its origin to a few Muslims and Hindus—notably Muzaffar Ahmed who, strangely enough, chose to remain in Calcutta after the partition. The leadership of the CPI gradually went into the hands of the Hindus; and that applied to East Pakistan as well.

This was perhaps another reason why the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP) could not find mass contact easy against the sway of the Muslim League zealots at least for a certain period. Absence of a firm base in the undivided Bengal among the Muslim peasants was another reason why the predominantly Hindu CPP leadership found itself cut off. But in fairness to them it must be admitted that the Muslims within the CPI or among the CPP never worked on communal lines. In those days, the Communist movement had an international character and the Comintern was a reality. They were looking towards Moscow and they passed a historic resolution in September 1942, long before partition which urged that India should be an independent federation of nationalities formed according to language, culture and ethnic origin. In the CPI election manifesto of 1946, the party again advocated that power should be transferred to 17 different "sovereign national constituent assemblies," rather than to India and Pakistan. The partition of India angered the leftists most and they had often charged that the partition was "foisted upon" Bengal by a coalition of British and Indian business interests.

While in India the Communist Party was allowed to function after a short ban and could participate in free elections, the Zhadanov line followed by the Communists in Pakistan led to insurrectional activities and within the first five years of partition, more than 3,000 Communists in East Pakistan were in prison. Both Samar Guha, a Hindu leftist in his book *Non-Muslims behind the Curtain of East Pakistan*, and a Muslim Congressite, the late Professor Humayun Kabir, in his book *Minorities in a Democracy* wrote about the conditions of the Hindu Communists in East Pakistan. According to them the Pakistan Communist members of the Hindu Community were subject to the same discrimination as other Hindus in East Pakistan. Most of them were from relatively well-established families who were accused of practising centuries of oppression against the Muslims.

The turning point for the Communist movement in East Pakistan came in 1950, following the communal riots in East Pakistan and West Bengal. This resulted in mass migration from East Pakistan to West Bengal. The migration during the period 1947-50 was negligible compared to the massive exodus in 1950. With the migration of over two-thirds of the CPP workers to

India, the number of skilled and trained cadre left in East Pakistan could not have exceeded 3,000 in 1969 and large numbers of them were in prison. The policy of the Soviet Union and China towards Pakistan made a lot of difference to the Communist movement in East Pakistan. The Soviet interests in the mid-fifties were to bring India out of the clutches of Washington and keep Pakistan away from the influence of China. China grew increasingly warm towards Pakistan. But this was utilised by the martial law authorities to suppress the Communists in East Pakistan blaming them for subversive activities and for planning insurrections.

President Ayub said on several occasions from Dacca that the "pro-Peking Communists out of Calcutta were carrying on a campaign, for a weak federal structure, parliamentary democracy, too many provinces and an ineffective government for Pakistan." The same demands were, however, placed by the Awami League in their Six-Point Formula and they went a step further by demanding new fiscal measures and two Reserve Banks for the two wings. It is no wonder that Ayub Khan and Yahya Khan and all of their ilk saw the Indian bogey in every popular movement in East Pakistan. So when the Communists in East Pakistan failed to operate as a separate entity, they infiltrated the NAP of Maulana Bhasani and the NAP of Muzaffar Ahmed keeping a very small group to work under cover as Communists. These conditions did not satisfy many and they advocated a militant Communist movement in East Pakistan on the Naxalite pattern noticed in India to fight against "American imperialism socialist revisionism and the reactionary, feudal bourgeoisie."

Going back to the DAC negotiations prior to the capture of power by General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan, Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army, it is time to examine the role played by the fanatic Muslim organisations like Jamait-e-Islam and the arch-communal leaders like Maudoodi of West Pakistan. When the communalists ultimately failed to include their reactionary lines in the DAC formula, the Maudoodi group was determined to sabotage the conference by advancing reactionary slogans like "Pakistan's mission is a work for the glory of Allah!" When this also failed to divert the people, Maudoodi threatened that forces of Islam would pull out the "tongues of the

socialists." These arch-communalists also built up a fascist-type frenzy over the burning of the *Quran* and provoked clashes with the followers of "Islamic socialism" so that the movements for democratic rights could be turned into a fight between Islam and socialism. The rising fury of the Jamait, convinced many that Jamait-e-Islam was the main enemy. In fact, the Jamait was just a tool. To be more precise, in the DAC the efforts of the reactionary group including Maudoodi and Chaudhury Mohammad Ali, were aimed at halting the further development and radicalisation of the movement. The military rulers saw that the right reactionary and the communal groups would not be able to stem the democratic upsurge and turned to Bhutto, the mercurial mascot of the army since the days Ayub had come into power. Referring to Bhutto's comeback Amina Nizami writes: "Bhutto who had started with the three-headed bogey of Islam, Democracy and Socialism, and who, like a weathercock, had sabotaged, supported, blessed and opposed the DAC and the Round Table in turn, became most active in his effort to thwart any transfer of power and the holding of elections through the Round Table."

Maulana Bhasani was isolated. His principal organiser, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, remained in the Awami League. Bhasani was yet to find an organiser. His party, in spite of its mass following, never had a strong base, nor an organised cadre. He was then called "rabble rouser" by a noted Awami Leaguer. To stage a comeback, Bhasani opposed the general strike in East Pakistan on the eve of the DAC. His bid to sabotage the formation of the DAC also failed. He staged a temporary political comeback on the students' front after 17 February 1969 but was resolutely rebuffed by the SAC. So he joined hands with Bhutto and added Islamic socialism to his armoury. So, we find him in the strange situation of advocating Islamic socialism which is a reactionary ideology; of supporting the Eleven-Point Programme of the SAC, which represents the ideology of NAP; and even of toeing ultra-left Naxalite lines.

Baffled by Bhasani's witches' cauldron his Party Secretary, Mohammad Toka, left the party and formed the ultra-left, pro-Peking NAP in East Pakistan. The army seized the opportunity to create further confusion among the masses so that they could rule over them with iron hands. Had Bhasani and Bhutto been in

the DAC, the Jamait group and Maudoodi could have been cornered. But despite all the efforts of the NAP, Bhasani and others refused to join the DAC. So the 52 months of intense struggle failed to achieve the objective and ultimately Yahya emerged as another dictator of Pakistan.

But the Awami League was to profit from its experience during the next phase of its movement. Within three years of Yahya's assuming power, Pakistan broke up; what could have been a federation with regional autonomy became a dismembered State within 25 years of its creation. The concept of a theocratic State was buried under the Golgotha of white bones piled up in a desperate bid to keep Pakistan inviolate. A part of Pakistan died to be reborn as Bangladesh.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Islam and Inequality

The partition which ushered Pakistan into existence was, as we have observed, born out of the British sense of fair play towards the Indian Muslims whom they had played up during their struggle with Hindu nationalism. In effect, the British, before winding up their Indian Empire, were entirely responsible for the deliberate creation of a theocratic State, a blatantly mediaeval concept in a most uncongenial climate of progressive thinking. In giving Muslims a homeland, cultural and ethnic differences were bulldozed and Pakistan, in order to bear the same connotation for a hard-boiled and jingoistic Punjabi and a destitute and peace-loving Bengali must have meant a common protection under Islam. Now that pan-Islamism has been long dead, the Bengalis did not take very long to realise that the *Quran* could not be a dispenser of social and economic justice. The East Pakistanis might have been "brothers" to the West, but it was not their piety but their jute and tea which mattered to the West wing. The economic and social exploitation of brother Muslims stemmed out of the export imperative. To export, the West looked towards the East just as it needed Bengali jute and tea. And the exploitation assumed such a proportion that even Britain, father of modern colonialism would have been put to shame. The old Muslim Leaguers from Bengal were gradually shooed out of power and Fazlul Haq was even expelled from the party by Jinnah. So, when Pakistan was born, power gravitated towards the West and a period of domination over the Bengalis started. What the founding fathers of Pakistan in their fear of Hindu domination had ignored was that religion could never be the binding force in creating a State out of people of different cultures and ethnic origins. That

religion ceased to be a binding force was proved just after the death of the Prophet. He said: "All true believers should unite." But the first nail was hammered in the coffin of unity by Yazid at Karbala after the death of the Prophet. That the Muslim States, even with the same cultural background, could not live together had been proved time and again in the Middle East where constant in-fighting and jockeying for power made the Middle East countries easy prey for European colonialism. The King of Jordan and the King of Saudi Arabia never saw eye to eye; Egypt and Iraq fought for Arab supremacy and their inherent weakness brought them defeat in the Arab-Israeli war in which ten million Jews defeated a hundred million Arabs.

Since the formation of the State of Pakistan, a quarter century ago, the people of East Pakistan derived little benefit and consolation other than a limited sense of security that they would not be under Hindu domination any more. Yet it is doubtful if the break-up would have come so soon had not the Islamabad regime been under military rule for so long. The bankruptcy of the Pakistani politicians was apparent everywhere. The politics of murder was rampant. Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan was shot dead in a public meeting. His murderer was shot at the same meeting by a policeman and the policeman who removed the assassin was found murdered by some unknown assailants. All this smacks of political intrigue of the tribal type. Speaking at a meeting in Karachi on 30 June 1970, the Awami League President, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, charged that the circumstances leading to the death of H.S. Suhrawardy in a Beirut Hotel were unnatural. He claimed that Suhrawardy was from the very beginning a victim of conspiracies in Pakistan. He revealed that four days before his death he had received a letter from Suhrawardy stating that he was in perfect health and planned to leave for Pakistan after four days. Mujib insinuated that the circumstances in which the telephone operator entered Suhrawardy's locked room to find him dead were extremely fishy. It is true that even Jinnah did not want a truncated Pakistan. But when they got it, the Muslim leaders failed to visualise reality.

Instead of acting judiciously and with wisdom they worked in a state of perpetual panic of demographic domination by the people of East Pakistan who by their brute majority could form

the government. That is the principal reason why the Pakistan Government was never in favour of holding elections based on universal adult franchise with one man one vote. This consideration clouded the vision of the Pakistani leaders and the army as well. Even according to the census of 1961, the population in East Pakistan was 50,853,721 and that of West Pakistan 42,987,261. Assuming that the proportion of persons qualified to vote is about the same in each wing; assuming, further that the representation in the National Assembly should be proportional to population, it follows that East Pakistan should have more seats in the Assembly than its Western counterpart and should continue to have the same until the balance of population was substantially changed.

Naturally, the country's policy and administration would be dominated by the East wing. Curiously enough, the leaders from East Pakistan never asserted their strength. On the contrary, they went on complaining that they were being dominated and exploited by the West. At the time of the creation of Pakistan there was a tacit agreement that a sense of parity should be maintained. Unfortunately this did not happen. When Pakistan's first military dictator, Ayub Khan, gave the country a constitution in 1962, the *Dawn* of Karachi, commenting on a policy announced some years earlier, wrote: "We believe in the grand conception—one country, one people, one government, one legislature, and one purse," which may be interpreted as meaning the abolition of provincial governments and enforcing a fully centralised administration. Another interesting factor is the belief among the West Pakistanis that the people of East Pakistan were "*Hindu-ka bachcha*" implying that they were low class converts from the Hindus. This was apparent not only when the army started its "pogrom" but could be dated as far back as 1962 when, at an Id prayer meeting in Karachi, Maulana Ehtishamul Haq charitably included a supplication to the Almighty to "create love for Pakistan in the hearts of Muslims of East Pakistan." This created a furore in East Pakistan and the *mullah* who was a prominent lawyer later explained that he had been misquoted—a shield that politicians often take shelter behind.

Whatever East Pakistan's grievances, it is certain that they

were weighty enough to call for official explanations. Thus in the First Five Year Plan, out of the total outlay of Rs 871 crores, only Rs 400 crores were allocated to East Pakistan, whereas West Pakistan was given Rs 471 crores with a further Rs 64 crores for the Centre. This was the background at the beginning and before we discuss the economic disparity in depth, let us see how the external influence and international factors made Pakistan a pawn.

To find the external interests in Pakistan, we should go back not to undivided India, but to the Teheran Conference of 1943 and the Yalta Conference of 1944. It was at the Big Three conferences in Teheran and Yalta that the fate of Pakistan was decided. It may sound strange to mention Pakistan at a time when it was not even in an embryonic stage. What really happened at these two major conferences? It was Franklin D. Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin, the representatives of the two Super Powers, who dominated the conferences and came to an agreement. It was Roosevelt who thought that there was no need for their interests to clash, and it was his suggestion to Stalin to divide the world into three different areas; a social-democratic capitalist sphere; a Communist and revolutionary socialist sphere; and a third world in which the Soviet Union and the United States would be engaged in friendly rivalry for influence. India or rather the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent fell into the third category. The two dissenters were Winston Churchill of Britain and Charles de Gaulle of France. Churchill saw in the move a design to liquidate the British colonies and de Gaulle wanted to retain his own commonwealth of French colonies. This scared the British and they entered into a bilateral agreement with France to support her on Indo-China provided she loosened her grip on the Middle East, mostly Syria and Lebanon. This was the background which virtually gave India independence at the cost of the partition of the country, thanks to diabolical British ingenuity: Without any rancour against the British nation, it looks really an amazing coincidence that riots should have taken such a heavy toll in the Indian subcontinent, in Cyprus, in Mauritius and in Guiana at about the same time. They shared one misfortune in common; they were all British colonies.

When Jinnah died, Quaid-e-Millat Liaquat Ali Khan became

the Prime Minister. He tried to run the country in the democratic way again by reversing the order in which Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah was running the country. He brought Khawaza Nazimuddin to become the Governor-General for two reasons: to find an ally in East Pakistan to offset the Punjabi propaganda that he was a pro-Indian, and to curb the power of the Governor-General, an office meant to be simply a figurehead one in a democratic set-up but upgraded by Jinnah for his own purposes. He also tried to change the Indian Independence Act to curb the supreme power vested in the Governor-General. The post of the President of the Constituent Assembly, held by Jinnah as the President of the Muslim League and the Governor-General and Supreme Commander of the Army, Navy and Air Force was also given to a politician, Maulvi Tamizuddin Khan.

All these steps perhaps hastened Liaquat Ali's end in October 1951. This was the first attack by the bureaucracy against a politician and subsequent investigations revealed that foreign intrigue had affected Pakistan politics. Liaquat Ali died at a time when Pakistan was considering the possibility of entering into a Security Pact with the United States, a pact which resulted in massive arms aid to Pakistan in 1953-54 in the Dulles-Eisenhower era. There was a rumour which gained substantial support in Pakistan in those days that Liaquat Ali Khan was assassinated because of his "pro-American orientation" and his assassin, Said Akhbar, was shot down by Korban Ali, a police officer. The latter, promoted for killing Said Akhbar, was suspected to be a British agent. This is doubtful.

US military aid, though originally meant against India, was publicly professed as a protection against China. And Britain did not intend to fall foul of China at that time. Whatever the truth, there was no attempt to institute a thorough investigation into the murder and the documents relating to the investigation were supposed to be destroyed in a mysterious air crash. There was no court of enquiry. Begum Liaquat Ali Khan's sporadic shouts of "I accuse" were silenced by an ambassadorial assignment in Holland in the winter of 1955-56. A Karachi columnist, Azum-u-Din wrote: "The one-time Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr Mohammad Ali of Bogra, had once tried his best to unveil this conspiracy and the culprits, but unfortunately he was made

a target of palace intrigues said to have been engineered by bigwigs who were out to shield the guilty by hook or by crook." Mohammad Ali did nothing more than "suggesting on January 1 1954 that the American Government should put an FBI agent at Pakistan's disposal to investigate the case."

Some eminent Pakistani leaders feared that Liaquat Ali Khan had been assassinated because he was opposed to a military alliance with the United States. In that case the blame would ultimately attach to the bad dog—the CIA. But the CIA had not come to prominence in 1951. Immediately after Liaquat Ali's death, delegation after delegation started pouring in from the United States to finalise the Pakistan-American Security Treaty. In 1953 John Foster Dulles and Harold Stassen visited Pakistan, followed by seven members of the House Armed Services Committee and the deputy chief of the American Mission in Turkey. Major-General Iskander Mirza and General Ayub Khan visited Ankara from where Ayub flew to Washington. The road was cleared for massive arms aid to flow. After this, Governor-General Ghulam Mohammad visited Washington on "medical grounds." The stage was set. Meanwhile, American influence grew in Pakistan. American technocrats in every field and administrative officials flooded Pakistan. They were friendly with the bureaucracy and it was they who were making decisions. Even for promotions the bureaucrats used to influence the higher echelons through the American experts working as advisers for various projects and departments.

military aid was intended to bolster the armed containment of the Communist Block in the Dulles era of US foreign policy, but apart from the brief border war with India in 1965 the only active use of these sophisticated weapons has been against the unarmed and defenceless people of East Pakistan."

American foreign policy in the Dulles era was not based on *quid pro quo* but it had also an undertone of browbeating those who did not want to toe the American line. Dulles and V.I. Lenin differed almost in everything, representing ultimately irreconcilable values, but Dulles believed with equal force in Lenin's famous saying: "If you are not with us, you are against us." And weapons given to Pakistan found their best use on the plains of the Punjab and in East Pakistan in the Indo-Pakistan wars of 1965 and 1971.

It is doubtful if Dulles believed that Patton tanks could be manoeuvred in the Karakoram pass or in the Gilgit areas, or for that matter could these sophisticated weapons be of use in mountain warfare with China or the Soviet Union? In the final analysis, therefore, Dulles's pretended bulwark against Communism was really a means to cow down India. The propaganda of the Western Press about "100 million fighting men of Pakistan" or "one Pakistani soldier equals seven Indian soldiers" just confirmed Dulles's theory. Unfortunately for the hawks of the United States, 93,000 of Pakistani soldiers became prisoners of war in a conflict which lasted a bare fortnight; a record unmatched in any other war in world military history, including the Wehrmacht of Hitler. The 1965 war exploded the myth of the invincibility of the Pakistani Army. They, however, fought well.

The moratorium did not deter Pakistan from trying to build up her army on her own. And China was there to equip a whole division of the Pakistan Army. After 1965, Pakistan raised one new division and two independent brigades armed with Chinese weapons and assorted Soviet and Chinese weapons, artillery and 130 millimetre guns which can hit a target 18 miles away. Surprisingly, the United States suddenly decided to revoke the embargo on supply of arms to Pakistan in October 1970. One explanation could be that the United States needed Pakistan's help in her coming *detente* with China and as *quid pro quo* agreed

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Since 1951, Pakistan has been a major recipient of US economic aid amounting to nearly three billion dollars by 1969. But the quantum of military assistance to Pakistan, though a classified matter, would amount to somewhere between 1.5 billion to two billion dollars. All this military aid came between 1954 and 1965. In 1965 there was a moratorium for a short period and arms in the shape of spares and military transport soon started to flow in again. The assistance included F-104 Starfighters, Patton tanks, armoured personnel carriers, and automatic and recoilless infantry weapons. Referring to the supply of arms to Pakistan the *Washington Post* wrote: "This impressive array of modern weaponry was given expressly for defensive purposes. With Pakistan, an early member of SEATO and CENTO, this



## Islam and Inequality

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to supply arms to Pakistan. The other is that the United States was convinced by reports of the CIA that India would not tolerate any "monkey business" across her border, and failing to move the United Nations and the Western Powers to pressure Pakistan, she was determined to take decisive steps to put an end to the flow of the refugees once and for all. India had absorbed six million refugees from East Bengal since the partition, and in 1971 India was groaning under the pressure of the refugees whose number swelled to almost ten million between March and November.

The last reason is the most unlikely, because the United States could have had no information that within six months the military junta in East Pakistan would start its genocide and that India would have to take large numbers of refugees within a year. The only explanation is that the Americans anticipated the election results and wanted to bolster up Pakistan's military might to unsettle India's efforts in the economic field. Among the supplied items in the post-1970 period were about 300 armoured personnel carriers, four maritime reconnaissance aircraft, and six F-104 jet fighters for which India at one time had offered to pay in cash, and seven B-57 bombers.

It is fortunate for India that barring Ellsworth Bunker, all American Ambassadors to India, including Kenneth B. Keating who was sent by Nixon, happened to understand the Indian point of view. Of these Chester Bowles and J.K. Galbraith were most respected in India. All the time these keen-sighted emissaries had sent realistic assessments of the situation and had requested the American Governments to stop the arms race in the sub-continent. But their reports were either ignored or were not found suitable in the global strategy of the United States, particularly in South Asia. Writing in the *Washington Post* on 15 August 1971 India's Independence Day, Chester Bowles points out that "A series of miscalculations by the United States Government in the last twenty years has contributed significantly to this explosive [Indo-Pakistan confrontation] situation. The initial blunder occurred in the winter of 1954 when the US agreed to modernise and expand Pakistan's armed forces in return for vague assurances that Pakistan would become 'our loyal ally'. The objective of this arrangement, John Foster

Dulles emphasised, was to block the expansion of the USSR into the Middle East and of China into non-Communist Asia. The West Pakistanis, of course, had no intention of fighting the Soviet or the Chinese in support of US policies. Indeed the US military equipment which they asked for and received, is of no use in the mountain passes through which the Soviet or Chinese invasion would come. Our tanks, motorised artillery and fighter planes would be of use only in a war with India on the plains of the Punjab, and they were so used in 1965....

"Moreover, the assumption that Pakistan was a nation of 130 million 'fighting Moslems' eager and willing to shoot whichever Communists the United States designated was absurd. For the US to spend more than 800 million dollars to build up West Pakistan's military capacity [almost all arms have gone to the West, as any East Pakistani refugee will attest] against the USSR is about as rational as if the Soviets were to arm Mexico to counter-balance the United States. Unhappily, our 1954 decision to arm Pakistan was only the first of a series of miscalculations. As each argument in support of the misguided exercise was knocked down, its proponents quickly produced another. Thus when it became clear that the Pakistanis had no intention of opposing either the USSR or China, a new rationalisation to justify our arms shipment was produced: US military assistance to Pakistan, it was asserted, was really designed to assure continued use of our Peshawar air base in West Pakistan, from which U-2 spy planes overflew Soviet Union. In off-record meetings, Congressional Committees and the Press were told that this installation was 'utterly essential to the security of the United States'."

In spite of opposition from the Congress and sensible publicists, the arms supply continued. America asserted that if the United States did not supply arms to Pakistan, China would. In October 1970, the United States again raised the ante. Pakistan was permitted to purchase one squadron of B-57 bombers, which were used for the pre-emptive airstrike against India on 3 December 1971, and a sizeable number of APCs to carry troops over the plains of north India. The other two potent uses of US-gifted arms were the bombing of civilians inside Afghanistan in 1958 and against the unarmed people of East Pakistan in 1971.

The other explanation is equally naive; that only the 1970 arms shipment could make possible the Kissinger trip to Peking from Pakistan.

China started befriending Pakistan after the 1962 war with India. Her policy is understandable. She was arming the enemy's enemy. The Soviet help that came to Pakistan in the form of economic and military aid was partly to woo Pakistan away from China and partly to demonstrate that the Soviet Union could play the effective third-party role in a real crisis; Tashkent proved it, though there was tacit American support behind it. Even in the 1971 war the Soviet Union did not want India to crush Pakistan completely, because a totally wrecked Pakistan would be of no help either to the Soviet Union or to India. India, however, had no designs on the West; she fought in self-defence and perhaps with the covert desire to crush the military machine of Pakistan for some time.

This was the international set-up in Pakistan. No wonder that the dictators found it suitable to remain in power dancing to the tune of deliverers across the ocean. Perhaps the Pakistani leaders lacked the wisdom, perhaps they suffered from a persecution mania which led them to choose the path they did. Even in the days following the partition, Jinnah made it a point not to let the people of Pakistan know about the efforts being made in India to bring peace in the riot-torn areas. In many of these pockets in north and eastern India H.S. Suhrawardy had accompanied Mahatma Gandhi. Pakistan's representative, Zahid Hussain, also accompanied Mahatma Gandhi. On one occasion at Hyderabad House in Delhi, Zahid Hussain was asked by the Reuter correspondent, Jyoti Sengupta, how the rehabilitation work was going on in India. Hussain said that the Muslims were feeling safe in India and they were grateful to Gandhi, Nehru, and the Government of India. The next day he contradicted his statement from Karachi. When he was asked why he had contradicted his earlier statement, he had to admit that Jinnah had hauled him up for saying such things. The leaders of Pakistan, like the Nazi zealots, tried to squeeze out the Hindus from the West. Though they had been successful to a great extent in the East wing, all further attempts to drive out the minorities after 1952 failed in East Bengal. But the most un-

fortunate thing perhaps was that the tactics applied on the day of the Great Calcutta Killings on 16 August 1946, the Direct Action Day of the Muslim League, were accepted as copybook tactics by the Yahya regime when it let loose the army "to sort them out." History repeated itself in a different way, but out of the bloodbath emerged a new State called Bangladesh.

Whatever might have been the share of international intrigue in pitting Pakistan against India, the inherent contradiction within a State was nowhere more apparent than in Pakistan. The economic domination by the West wing, the onslaught on the culture of the East wing and the persistent denial of their rights in decision-making, goaded them into taking the plunge. I was twice in Pakistan during the Ayub regime in 1961 and 1962. The most interesting incident then was the editorial duel going on between the *Azad* and the *Ittefaq*, the organ of the Awami League, edited by the late Tofazzal Hussain, who died fighting against the West Pakistani regime. It was the Tagore Centenary Year and the controversy raged over whether Rabindrasangeet (songs of Tagore) should be broadcast over Radio Pakistan. The *Ittefaq* supported Tagore as a Bengali poet but the *Azad* opposed it. The onslaught on Tagore, efforts to foist Urdu as the State language and a thousand other small irritants made the East Pakistanis feel like aliens in their own land. A complete ban on the flow of culture between East Pakistan and West Bengal was another sore point. No journalists were allowed from the East wing to come to Calcutta. A Pakistani journalist could visit all the countries except India for he needed special endorsement on his passport to visit India.

In 1962 when the Indian Airlines Corporation started its new *Friendship* service to Dacca, it invited Pakistani journalists from the East wing. Two of the journalists who visited Calcutta were arrested by the martial law regime because they were thought to be pro-Indian. At Dacca I telephoned a journalist friend of mine from what was the then Shahbag Hotel but he did not dare to recognise me. Later, when we met at the Press Club, he told me that the telephones of all journalists, foreign and Pakistani, were being tapped. One of them told me, the Pakistan Government feel that Calcutta is our Mecca, and they get pleasure out of denying us a visit to Calcutta."

But the fund of goodwill for the Bengalis from this side of the border was not lacking. When the Pakistan Government pestered me by keeping a tail and tapping my telephone constantly, it was the Dacca journalists who suggested that I should stay at the Press Club and made arrangements for my stay there. And the journalists arranged secret meetings with political leaders and other journalists at the Press Club, because that was the only place where they felt direct shadowing by the police would be impossible. When I left after five days the Secretary told me very apologetically that I should not deny them the pleasure of hosting another Bengali journalist from the other side of the border. This was the mood and the attitude of the people of East Bengal towards their brothers in West Bengal.

The Pakistan Government made it a point not to appoint a Bengali as Deputy High Commissioner in Calcutta. Even if one was appointed, the First Secretary was always from West Pakistan. His duties included spying on and reporting against the Bengali employees. In the language of Hussain Ali, the now famous diplomat of Bangladesh who defected with all the Bengali employees of the Pakistan Deputy High Commission in Calcutta: "We were always spied upon by the Punjabis in the Mission and each of our moves, whom we meet and where we telephone is carefully and meticulously docketed and sent to the West."

In the higher echelons of the civil service of Pakistan, known as the CSP, the percentage of Bengalis was insignificant. Only during the Yahya regime were six Bengalis inducted into the Central Services and for the first time a Bengali was appointed the Chief Secretary of East Pakistan. Since 1947 all the Chief Secretaries in East Pakistan had been from the Punjab. The Bengali Chief Secretary was, however, removed promptly when the election results were out giving the Awami League absolute majority. Mohammad Ayoob of Nehru University, a noted scholar on Pakistan Affairs writes:

"Among the small coterie of bureaucrats and bureaucrats-turned-politicians who formed the real ruling clique of Pakistan until 1958, there was not one who was capable of representing East Bengal interests. Ghulam Mohammad, an ex-civil servant who became Pakistan's first Minister and rose to the post of Governor-General from 1951 to 1955, was from the Punjab.

Iskander Mirza, originally of the Indian Political Service, who at one time served as the British Government's Political Agent in tribal areas of North-West Frontier Province, is said to have been remotely related to the family of the Nawab of Murshidabad. He was certainly no Bengali in language, culture or sense of identification. Mirza was Pakistan's first Defence Secretary and rose by stages to become President. Chaudhuri Mohammad Ali, Pakistan's first and only Secretary-General, then Finance Minister and finally Prime Minister, who was another leading figure in the bureaucratic machine came from the Punjab. Aziz Ahmed, East Bengal's first Chief Secretary and Deputy Chief Martial Law Administrator in General Ayub's martial law regime came from the Punjab. During the Ayub days the same pattern continued. Fida Hassan, Ayub's Cabinet Secretary and on retirement Presidential Adviser, fell into the same category. So did Arshad Hussain, another civil servant who rose to be Ayub's Foreign Minister for a short time. Other leading lights of the Ayub regime were Altaf Gauhar, Information Secretary; Qudratullah Shahab, for a long time Secretary to the President; Ghulam Faruque, another civil servant to be the Commerce Minister; Mohammad Shoaib, for a long time Ayub's Finance Minister; and M.M. Ahmed, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission under President Ayub and Economic Adviser to the President under General Yahya Khan. No Bengali ever rose to the positions of power and eminence that these people occupied."

A recent report by an Advisory Panel for the Fourth Five Year Plan of Pakistan virtually admitted the injustice done to East Bengal. The most striking fact in this report is the widening of the economic gap between the income of the average West Pakistani and his Eastern counterpart. In 1959-60, the per capita income in West Pakistan was 32 per cent higher than in the East. Over the next ten years, the annual rate of growth of income of West Pakistan was 6.2 per cent while it was only 4.2 in East Pakistan. As a result, by 69-70 the per capita income of the West was 61 per cent higher than in the East. Thus in ten years, the income gap doubled in percentage terms; it increased even more in absolute terms. The report says :

East Pakistanis blame three instruments of Central Government

policy for their plight. These are:

- 1 Pakistan's scant resources, plus foreign aid, are directed unduly to the development of West Pakistan—to the comparative neglect of East Pakistan.
- 2 In particular, East Pakistan's foreign trade earnings are diverted to finance imports to West Pakistan.
- 3 Economic Policy favours West Pakistan at the expense of the East. Specifically, tariffs, import controls and industrial licensing compel East Pakistan to purchase commodities from the West which, but for the control, they could obtain more cheaply in world markets.

We believe the East Pakistani claims to be largely justified. First, it is indisputable that the bulk of public investment has been in West Pakistan, though the majority of the population lies in the East. With 60 per cent of the population, East Pakistan's share of Central Government development expenditure has been as low as 20 per cent during 1950-51 and 1954-65, attaining a peak of 36 per cent during the Third Five Year Plan period 1965-66 to 1969-70. Pakistan Government's argument that there were more investment opportunities in the West is far from true, as it is quite evident that the licensing policy was greatly responsible for this uneven growth. Another factor which should be borne in mind was the rampant corruption in the Pakistan administration. After the take over by President Ayub the Pakistani Press reported that a whole steam locomotive was stolen from the railway yard; it was dismantled and sold as scrap. The "permit system," a complicated bonus system and similar other sources of graft helped the West Pakistanis with contacts within the administration, military or otherwise, rather than their Eastern counterparts. Corruption, jobbery and five-per-centism were the order of the day. Though the corruption in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent dated as far back as the Bengal Famine of 1943 in which more than 1.4 million people died according to the official admission, the report of the Archibald Commission revealed that the bureaucracy and the members of the legislature and politicians-turned-agents of the permit-seekers, made a profit of Rs 1,000 on every person who



died of starvation. While in India, there was some check on the corruption through fear of exposure, virtual dictatorship made corruption sacrosanct in Pakistan.

Another important factor was the forcing out of Hindus from West Pakistan and seizure of their property. The bureaucrats and politicians seized the abandoned property of the Sikhs and the Hindus with scandalous cupidity. The irregular, unfair, and illegal re-distribution of property abandoned by the migrant Hindus and Sikhs at the time of partition gave the necessary fillip to corruption. An inquiry conducted by a retired British Judge, Sir Thomas Ellis, was instituted by the Pakistan Government, but under various political pressures, the scope of the inquiry was so curtailed as to make it useless.

Going back to the economic disparity between the two wings, even a casual examination will reveal that foreign exchange had been allocated in a manner detrimental to East Pakistan. Over the last two decades, East Pakistan's share of Pakistan's total export earnings has varied between 50 and 70 per cent, while its share of imports has been in the range of 25 to 30 per cent. Until 1962-63, East Pakistan had shown significant surpluses on foreign accounts, which have changed in recent years to small deficits. Besides, the general economic policy also favoured West Pakistan. The West's preponderant share of imports and investments might have provided expensive necessities for all Pakistani people. In fact, it allowed the development of inefficient industries, which, ironically, have prospered largely because of tariffs and quotas that have made East Pakistan a captive market. Over 40 per cent of all exports of West Pakistan are sold to East Pakistan; in 1968-69, the West sold 50 per cent more to the East than it bought from the East. An analysis of the foreign trade data reveals that a net transfer of resources has taken place from East to West Pakistan. According to the Planning Commission Advisory Commission report, more than 2.6 billion dollars had been transferred from the East to the West wing over the period 1948-49 to 1968-69. The other interesting point is that without denuding East Pakistan, the military machine of the country, which had grown out of all proportion to the need of the country, could not be maintained. So the Central Government of Pakistan, staffed by more than

87 per cent West Pakistanis, particularly Punjabis, saw to it that the domination of the East wing during the decades was supreme.

The first attempt by the bureaucratic-military dictatorship of Pakistan was to kill the Bengalis culturally then economically and thirdly by trying to create a nation devoid of any intellectuals so that it would remain for ever subservient to the Punjabi regime of the West. During my visit to Pakistan in 1962, the the martial law administrator and Governor, Azam Khan, extended an invitation to Dacca journalists to celebrate Pakistan Day. The invitation cards were printed in English and Urdu. All the journalists refused to attend the function and the cards had to be reprinted in Bengali and Urdu. Even then surprise attacks on lone army men were not uncommon. In Comilla alone the number of missing army men who tried to seek solace in the embrace of Bengali village women would total about 50 in one year.

The domination of the East wing started from 1947 when the capital of Pakistan was Karachi. Over Rs 200 million were spent on its growth and when it was fully developed it was handed over to the West Pakistan Provincial Government. When it was found that Karachi, in spite of all investment would never put on a steel-and-glass sleekness, Islamabad was chosen as the capital of Pakistan and another Rs 200 million spent on its development. Compared to this, only Rs 20 million were spent on the development of Dacca as the second capital. Even today, the unfinished new capital beyond Tejgaon airport on the way to Mirpur stands as a mocking comment on the development in the East. All the offices of the Central Government were located in the West including the headquarters of the Army, Navy and Air Force, and even the Military Academy. Since 60 per cent of Pakistan's total budget is spent on defence, 80 per cent of that goes to West Pakistani contractors and armed personnel boosting the general economy of the West. When foreign investors wanted to invest in Pakistan it was made clear that their offices should have their headquarters in West Pakistan.

In the field of social welfare also, the same pattern of disparity is reflected. For the 55 million people of West Pakistan the number of doctors is 12,400, according to Pakistan Government

statistics published in 1970, whereas for the 75 million people of East Pakistan the number of doctors was only 7,600. The total number of hospital beds in the West was 26,000, while in the East wing the number of beds was only 6,000. Rural Health Centres in West Pakistan number 325; in East Pakistan the number is only 88. Rural employment in West Pakistan is 59 per cent and in the cities 41 per cent. In East Pakistan rural employment is 86 per cent and the urban employment only 14 per cent which indicates the shocking lack of industrialisation in the East wing of the country.

The staple food in West Pakistan is wheat. Rice is secondary. The price of wheat in West Pakistan is Rs 10 per maund and rice Rs 18, whereas in East Pakistan the prices per maund are Rs 35 and Rs 50 respectively. How can one expect a better health standard when the East Pakistanis had to always pay a much higher price for food with an income much below the level of a West Pakistani's?

At the time Pakistan was born, the number of primary schools in the West was 8,413 and in the East it was 29,663. By 1969 the figure in West Pakistan went up to 39,418 and that in the East wing went down to 28,308; this, in spite of the increase in the number of children. In case of secondary schools the increase in the West wing was by 176 per cent whereas in the East it was 114 per cent; in colleges, the increase was over 657 per cent in the West and 320 per cent in the East. The same disparity is marked in the vocational education. The Dacca University, which in the pre-partition days could boast of scholars like Dr Meghnad Saha, Dr S.K. Dey, Dr Mohammed Shahidullah, Professor Satyen Bose and others, Muslims and Hindus, was gradually denuded of the elite during the process of squeezing out the Hindus during the Muslim League regime, and then by the gradual emasculation of the East wing by the deliberate policy of the West Pakistani bureaucrats and politicians. So by 1969, increase in the number of scholars in West Pakistan went up by 30 times while in the East it was only five times; and they too were frustrated because they had to be content with second rate jobs; the first preference almost invariably went to West Pakistanis. This was the background and if the East Pakistanis had not rebelled for so long, it was because they did not have a

leader, or perhaps their quota of sacrifice had not been enough. The famous poet of Bangladesh, Mrs Shofia Kamal told me in Dacca after liberation: "The day the Pakistan Army started raping women and hurting children, the coffin for the unity of Pakistan was made by Allah; Pakistan was born through bloodshed and tears and rape and pillage and the end came too, through this, and remember, women of all communities suffered."

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Resurrected from the Coffin

The last nail in the coffin of Pakistan was driven not on the day General Yahya Khan took over from General Ayub Khan but the day Pakistan adopted an "Islamic" constitution. It was in 1956 that Pakistan became an Islamic Republic with a constitution. Fazlul Haq, the saddest of all perhaps on that day, was ready for a sell out to retain his power on the basis of a coalition between the United Front and the Muslim League as the majority partner. Neither Fazlul Haq, nor Hamudul Haq Chaudhuri nor Abdus Sattar who held high Cabinet positions in the Provincial Government opposed the government's draft constitution. The minority MPs met in an emergency session and they, with the progressive elements in the then East Pakistan, had to fight tooth and nail to oppose the constitution. By this time it was an open secret that the United Front group had signed a secret agreement in Muree with the Muslim League to agree to their communal constitution.

Fazlul Haq was under great pressure from the Nizam-e-Islam group within his United Front. The betrayal of East Bengal by Fazlul Haq angered all the Bengalis and his government and the party were in serious trouble. The other sore point was that in the new constitution, the name "East Bengal" had been dropped, thus robbing the Bengalis of their identity. This was an affront to the people of East Bengal. The Awami League fought against the communal constitution together with the Congress and other minorities. Acrimonious debate followed and the constitution had to be taken clause by clause. On 29 February 1956, on the final day of the debate, the House took up the

constitution for approval. H.S. Suhrawardy as the Opposition leader opposed it and proposed a round table conference to discuss it. He was ignored. The Awami League members *en bloc* walked out of the House in protest.

The constitution was passed and there was rejoicing everywhere except among the intellectuals and the farsighted progressive Muslims in Dacca. They knew that the seed of communalism had been permanently sown and the tree would bloom one day. The Awami League which had dropped the word "Muslim" from the name of the party started a popular movement against the constitution and "centralised control" and won popular support. In the meantime, Fazlul Haq had been made Governor of East Pakistan and Abu Hussain Sarkar, the Chief Minister. But the infighting among the uneasy coalition forced him to expand the number of ministers to 40 thus earning the sobriquet given by the Awami League "Ali Baba and the 40 thieves."

On 4 August 1956, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in a statement to the Press blamed Prime Minister Chaudhuri Mohammad Ali for trying "to cripple and paralyse East Pakistan and thus keep it under perpetual domination." How right he was! The statement ran: "It was he [Chaudhuri Mohammad Ali] who as a Finance Minister had been responsible for colossal economic and financial disparity between the two wings of Pakistan... People of East Pakistan know him very well and we remember him as the architect of the financial and economic destruction of East Pakistan."

In the meantime, the Awami League and the minority MPs and the National Congress had not been sitting idle. The Congress and the Awami League made a secret pact, known as "Pancha Sheel" of Congress Awami League Unity, and according to Jyoti Sengupta's *Eclipse of Pakistan* there was a written assurance given by the Awami League to the Congress and the minority MPs that if the Awami League ever came to power at the Centre it would make the constitution a secular one and act for a joint electorate. The combined opposition got the god-sent opportunity when the Central Government ordered the army to take over part of the civil administration on 11 July 1956. Many Western authors hold that the army in Pakistan had never shown any interest in politics or in the civil administration. This is

erroneous. The pretext was famine and the purpose was the proper distribution of food. The army officers not only took over the food organisation in the province but also looked after its distribution and usurped the role of judges in trying food offence cases. It was an opportunity too good for the Opposition to miss.

On 4 August 1956, the Awami League organised a hunger march in Dacca. Section 144 Cr.P.C. was promulgated. In a near by village, when the crowd violated Section 144, the police opened fire killing three on the spot and injuring many. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who was leading the march stepped forward, lifted the body of a young comrade and with fresh blood soaking his kurta and pyjama marched ahead with the young boy in his arms. This was only a prelude. March 1971 was yet to be. But before we come to the fateful day of March 25, let us look a little backward and see what Hassan Saheed Suhrawardy had been doing.

As the Awami League leader, he was supposed to be against all military pacts. He was professing that the foreign policy of Pakistan should be "friendly towards all with malice towards none" which had become a cliché grossly insulting to Abe Lincoln. Suhrawardy had to support the military pacts. Otherwise the Awami League would be hounded out of office by Governor-General Iskander Mirza. However much he might have craved the Foreign Ministership of Pakistan, it was denied to him and the trusted man of Mirza, Feroze Khan Noon, was given the portfolio. Meanwhile, when Suhrawardy went to China on a goodwill mission, Noon, with the blessings of General Mirza decided to take Pakistan a step further towards the military alliance. A statement by the Foreign Minister announced that Pakistan should be a member of the NATO. While all the American politicians had been telling all these years that arms aid to Pakistan was a part of America's policy of containing Communism, Noon at his Peshawar meeting declared openly that Pakistan needed the pact to fight her traditional enemy, India. This was the time when the rift between Maulana Bhasani and Suhrawardy became final leading ultimately to the formation of the National Awami Party. Bhasani issued a strongly worded statement in his personal capacity. On the return from China, Suhrawardy was supposed to attend a meeting of the Colombo Powers on November 12. But, without attending the meeting he flew to.

Teheran to join the Baghdad Pact Conference with Iskander Mirza. The Baghdad Pact was being dominated by the Shah of Iran and the ruling cliques of Turkey and Iraq. Pakistan was drawn into the Baghdad Pact by the bureaucratic Prime Minister of Pakistan, Chaudhuri Mohammad Ali.

Humiliated in Egypt because of Pakistan's pro-British stand on the Suez, seething in anger over Bhasani's statement condemning the military pact, Suhrawardy came to Dacca on December 3 and declared in an open meeting that those who were opposed to the military pacts were agents of India. He also claimed that he had enough proof with him to prove his allegations. Feelings ran high between him and the supporters of Maulana Bhasani. For some time, Suhrawardy was trying to make a dent in the students' fronts and during his Dacca trip he made a theatrical helicopter landing inside the Dacca University campus to address the students. At that meeting, he accused the pact opponents as enemy agents and abused India and the Soviet Union. He said: "If there are some among you who wish that we should be part of India and of another country [the Soviet Union], you need not agree with my foreign policy but so long as I am the Prime Minister I am going to see that Pakistan is made strong to keep its head high and it is not with these hands of mine that I am to weaken Pakistan."

After this the meeting challenged him to show the proof. On this issue Jyoti Sengupta in his book writes :

The story about the documentary proof about which Mr. Suhrawardy spoke in several meetings is interesting. A man it appears was sent by Pakistan intelligence branch to Calcutta. He approached a Hindu Mahasabha leader and posing as an emissary of Maulana Bhasani placed before him a forged letter supposed to be signed by Bhasani. In that letter Maulana is supposed to have written about *Akhanda* (undivided) Bharat and sought India's help. The Hindu Mahasabha leader believed this fellow and he wrote a letter to Bhasani through him. This letter was in the possession of Suhrawardy.

The other attempt was even sillier. The Pakistani intelligence service kept a telegram supposed to have been signed and sent



by Maulana Bhasani seeking Nehru's support. While senior Posts and Telegraph officials publicly admitted that they knew that the telegram was sent by someone using Bhasani's name the pro-Suhrawardy politicians even used that straw to malign the Maulana. I met Maulana Bhasani on 23 January 1972 at his residence at Santosh Tengail. We had a long talk regarding everything. He was all through a pragmatic politician and even after the liberation his earthy pragmatism remained the same. He was full of praise for Mrs Indira Gandhi and said openly that the forces against India were still strong and the quicker the Indian Army got out of Bangladesh the better. But he knew the consequence and said that if the Indian Army left the law and order situation would deteriorate immensely. He said that he had never believed that India would colonise Bangladesh. But he warned that the euphoria over, it was Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who would have to face the music. Unfortunately he never gave too much credit to the Sheikh for discretion. He gave him full marks for leadership, organisation but not for sober assessment and working with prudence. When I protested he gave an example to illustrate his view. He referred to the Protest Day in Dacca on January 26 which happened to be India's Republic Day. The protest was against India's integration of Kashmir. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was at that time the Minister of Commerce of East Pakistan and also the General Secretary of the Awami League. Unfortunately the League was then infested with communal student groups and they were trying to take the opportunity of teaching India a lesson. The target was the Indian Deputy High Commission in Dacca. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, according to Bhasani, could have thrown cold water on this misguided chauvinism which was to embitter Indo-Pakistan relations but instead of trying to stem the outbursts, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman decided to lead the procession.

To our knowledge, however, Sheikh's leadership though it created some *misunderstanding*, had prevented a lot of unpleasant situations which might have otherwise been created by anti-social elements who, masquerading as students, had taken part in the procession. They defied the saner sections of the student community, broke through their barricades and set fire to an effigy of Nehru at a time when the Indian Deputy High Commissioner,

S.N. Maitra, was talking to the students and listening to their demands. The moment he learnt of the burning of the effigy, the meeting broke up and the whole incident sparked off another round of recriminations in the Indo-Pakistan relations. If Mujib had acted indiscreetly during that protest march, he had shown enough of discretion during the post-election crises in 1971 which ultimately led to the break-up of Pakistan.

Before we discuss the crises which were the prelude to the birth of Bangladesh, let us look at the power structure of Pakistan in the post Ayub period.

The rulers of Pakistan knew that East Bengal would be difficult to rule without sharing power. But they were never of one opinion how that power could be shared. They would not trust Mujib with Foreign Policy or Defence. Neither could they revert to the total Parliamentary system as that would take away from the army the privileges and power they had been enjoying so long. Moreover, Mujib was committed to border trade with India and it was apparent that to him and possibly to his government also, the Kashmir issue, the cardinal point of Pakistan's hate-India policy, would be a remote one; the main consideration would be the welfare of the people of East Pakistan. But Pakistan could never have had any grounds for thinking that Mujib would sell out to India. Whatever might have been his contacts with India before the military take over in 1958 and after, the military rulers could not pinpoint any charges against him. The last one was the Agartala Conspiracy Case which Mujib himself called "the Rawalpindi Conspiracy" as the plan was hatched there.

The power structure in Pakistan in 1969 was like this: President Yahya remained the head; absolute power was shared by him with other Generals like Abdul Hamid Khan, Chief of Army Staff; S.G. M.M. Pirzada, Principal Staff Officer of the President; Tikka Khan, Governor of East Pakistan and later Corps Commander in the Chhamb-Sialkot Sector during the war; Gul Hasan, Chief of the General Staff; Umar, Chairman of the National Security Committee; and Akbar Khan, Director of Inter-Service Intelligence. According to Mohammad Ayoob, of the Nehru University the only two civilians whose views mattered were M.M. Ahmed, the President's Economic Adviser,

and Rizvi, Director of the Civil Intelligence Bureau. Rizvi lost face when the election results with the Awami League gaining an absolute majority came out. He had given General Yahya Khan an estimate that in East Pakistan as well as in West, no political party would have absolute majority and the army's heyday would continue. There was also an outer circle which consisted of the military Governors of the provinces. The crackdown of March 1971 was the only logical conclusion of such elaborate militarisation of so small a country.

It was the election results which toppled the house of cards built by the army. The Awami League which had fought on the Six-Point Formula found themselves riding a tiger from which they could not dismount. Any departure or compromise would mean betrayal of Bangladesh. Maulana Bhasani, whose party did not fight the 1970 elections took this opportunity and demanded that the people of Bangladesh should declare independence. After the election results were out, Maulana Bhasani, interpreting that the victory of the Awami League was a mandate from the people of Bangladesh to declare independence, declared openly that Pakistan in its existing form had never been accepted by the people and there was no reason why Bangladesh should not become independent. He went even further, urging President Yahya Khan to hold a referendum in East Pakistan on the demand of independence according to the Lahore Resolution which said that Bangladesh should be an independent State and not a State of Pakistan. The word "independent" in the Lahore Resolution, in my opinion, is also Bhasani's interpretation. Anyway the die was cast and the Yahya clique, which was waiting for the opportunity, seized upon it as the sign of betrayal of Pakistan by the Bengalis. Islam was now in danger. The Jihad was on. This time the crusade was against the Bengalis—the Hindus and Muslims alike.

Mujib was under tremendous pressure from within his party. His attempt to water down the Awami League stand was totally rejected. The left student groups, minus the Naxalites, declared independence on March 3, long before the word "independence" was uttered by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the mammoth meeting in Dacca on March 25. But even before that the Generals had taken their decision "to sort them out." If the Pakistanis had

limited their actions against selected politicians. Bengalis in the army and the police might have stayed neutral. "It was only when information got around that the Pakistani Army was out to kill the Bengali intellectuals and servicemen as well that we revolted to a man," said a very eminent MNA of the Awami League. And that was the crux of the problem. If the operation had been directed against only a section of the people, the mass upsurge would not have been possible; but the Pakistan Army Generals had woefully underestimated the intensity of Bengali nationalism. Another reason for the mistake committed by the army was the complacency that the Awami League, however good in winning elections, was not good enough to launch a revolution. After miscalculating once, the military junta of Islamabad decided to set matters right. Even Bhutto, referring to the elaborate planning by the army to liquidate all vestiges of resistance in East Pakistan, said: "They [the army] thought the complexion of the National Assembly would be one of small conflicting parties and no major party would emerge to dominate the Assembly and dictate their will."

According to Western correspondents stationed in Islamabad, it became increasingly difficult to book seats to Dacca from Karachi in the Pakistani domestic flights as General Yahya's "contingency plan" was in operation. In fact, from early 1971 reinforcements were being rushed to Dacca. They used to fly in plain clothes, and their equipment was sent either by ship or by special cargo flights, thus absolving Ceylon of charges of collusion with the army junta in regard to the genocide that followed. In the Indian Parliament the Foreign Minister and the Defence Minister had to answer a lot of questions about Ceylon permitting the Pakistan Army to fly to East Pakistan, but there was little India could do then as it would mean meddling with the internal affairs of another nation. David Lushak in his *Pakistan Crisis* wrote:

The soldiers being sent to East Pakistan from Karachi wore 'civvies' and so attracted no attention. About 26,000 West Pakistani troops were already stationed in the eastern wing. As the reinforcements flooded across, senior officers scrupulously planned the complex logistics of supplying and equipping

what was to become an occupying army of initially 35 to 40,000 and then to grow to 60,000 men from a sailing distance of 3,000 miles. It was calculated that it would take about two months to get the army into a state of full readiness. Unknown to any but the topmost general in Yahya Khan's inner Cabinet, the civil war which was the sole alternative to a return to civil power had begun. Mr Rehman Sobhan, a non-Bengali but close associate of Mujib and his political and economic adviser, wrote in a London Daily: 'The contingency battle plan had been worked out over the last two years when the Army had been given a glimpse of the true force of Bengali nationalism during the movement against Ayub. The strength of the Army this time had been raised from one understrength division to three divisions and an armoured brigade. But the decision to put the plan into action was probably taken sometime between March 1 and March 6 and was symbolised by the replacement of Lieutenant General Yakub on March 7, 1971 by Lieutenant General Tikka Khan', Tikka Khan is regarded as the most predatory of the Punjabi hawks.

But even then the sharp reaction in Dacca to the announcement by General Yahya Khan of the postponement of the date of the National Assembly meeting took Islamabad by surprise. Within hours of the announcement, life in Dacca came to a standstill. And within a week, the authority of the Yahya Government in the East wing was destroyed and the police and the people pledged support to Mujib. Yahya's decision to postpone the Assembly was regarded as a collective conspiracy with Bhutto to deprive a majority out of its share in a democracy. In fact, Yahya's close associate, General Umer, is known to have put "friendly pressures" on other West Pakistani political parties to toe the Bhutto line on the question of the opening of the National Assembly. Of the days preceding the army crackdown Rehman Sobhan writes:

... the decision to postpone the Assembly was seen as an attempt to save Bhutto's position when his strategy failed to win support among the West Pakistani people. Many Bengalis at that stage felt that self-rule for them could be at-

limited their actions against selected politicians, Bengalis in the army and the police might have stayed neutral. "It was only when information got around that the Pakistani Army was out to kill the Bengali intellectuals and servicemen as well that we revolted to a man," said a very eminent MNA of the Awami League. And that was the crux of the problem. If the operation had been directed against only a section of the people, the mass upsurge would not have been possible; but the Pakistan Army Generals had woefully underestimated the intensity of Bengali nationalism. Another reason for the mistake committed by the army was the complacency that the Awami League, however good in winning elections, was not good enough to launch a revolution. After miscalculating once, the military junta of Islamabad decided to set matters right. Even Bhutto, referring to the elaborate planning by the army to liquidate all vestiges of resistance in East Pakistan, said: "They [the army] thought the complexion of the National Assembly would be one of small conflicting parties and no major party would emerge to dominate the Assembly and dictate their will."

According to Western correspondents stationed in Islamabad, it became increasingly difficult to book seats to Dacca from Karachi in the Pakistani domestic flights as General Yahya's "contingency plan" was in operation. In fact, from early 1971 reinforcements were being rushed to Dacca. They used to fly in plain clothes, and their equipment was sent either by ship or by special cargo flights, thus absolving Ceylon of charges of collusion with the army junta in regard to the genocide that followed. In the Indian Parliament the Foreign Minister and the Defence Minister had to answer a lot of questions about Ceylon permitting the Pakistan Army to fly to East Pakistan, but there was little India could do then as it would mean meddling with the internal affairs of another nation. David Lushak in his *Pakistan Crisis* wrote:

The soldiers being sent to East Pakistan from Karachi wore 'civvies' and so attracted no attention. About 26,000 West Pakistani troops were already stationed in the eastern wing. As the reinforcements flooded across, senior officers scrupulously planned the complex logistics of supplying and equipping

what was to become an occupying army of initially 35 to 40,000 and then to grow to 60,000 men from a sailing distance of 3,000 miles. It was calculated that it would take about two months to get the army into a state of full readiness. Unknown to any but the topmost general in Yahya Khan's inner Cabinet, the civil war which was the sole alternative to a return to civil power had begun. Mr Rehman Sobhan, a non-Bengali but close associate of Mujib and his political and economic adviser, wrote in a London Daily: 'The contingency battle plan had been worked out over the last two years when the Army had been given a glimpse of the true force of Bengali nationalism during the movement against Ayub. The strength of the Army this time had been raised from one understrength division to three divisions and an armoured brigade. But the decision to put the plan into action was probably taken sometime between March 1 and March 6 and was symbolised by the replacement of Lieutenant General Yakub on March 7, 1971 by Lieutenant General Tikka Khan', Tikka Khan is regarded as the most predatory of the Punjabi hawks.

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... the decision to postpone the Assembly was seen as an attempt to save Bhutto's position when his strategy failed to win support among the West Pakistani people. Many Bengalis at that stage felt that self-rule for them could be at-

tained only outside the framework of one Pakistan. Confronted with this mood Mujib staked his political life, first in his public meeting on March 3, then before a million people on March 7 when he deflected the demand for independence towards a negotiated demand for full autonomy. On March 7, the Army in Dacca was prepared for initiating a bloodbath if Mujib declared independence. Heavy machine guns were brought and emplacements made all along the cantonment perimeter. Tanks were ready and the Air Force had been alerted. Denied an open provocation by Mujib, and faced with a complete erosion of Central authority in the East Wing, Yahya appeared to opt for compromise. He flew to Dacca on March 15 with a clutch of Generals, several of whom secreted themselves in the cantonment to finalise their battle plan for March 25....

Also a selected group of plain-clothes commandoes had been infiltrated into selected urban areas to create trouble as a cover for military action. The need for this sort of synthetic provocation was becoming more necessary as Yahya saw the extent to which Mujib's Awami League volunteers had established law and order throughout the East Wing. Apart from an early communal riot in Chittagong on March 2 and 3, when the Army was responsible for law and order, the Province had been extraordinarily peaceful.

Against this backdrop, the Yahya-Mujib talks started in Dacca. Since Yahya knew the next move he would be making, he made a pretence of accepting Mujib's principal demands of withdrawal of martial law and transfer of power to the elected civilian government representatives. Mujib was so pleased that he even magnanimously agreed to allow Yahya to remain President of Pakistan for the interim period. He also agreed to separate sessions of the National Assembly. This was a concession to Bhutto who feared that in a joint session of the Assembly, Mujib would have a two-thirds majority with the Pathans and the Baluch and other small anti-Bhutto parties to get the six-point demand passed within the constitution. Besides, behind the facade of Bhutto's apparent desire to restore democracy was his soaring desire to become Prime Minister of Pakistan, if not through democratic means, at least with the blessings of



the army. According to Anthony Mascarenhas, Bhutto was reported to have told a select gathering at a party that they were talking to the future Prime Minister of Pakistan. Quite in keeping with Bhutto's flamboyance, Yahya also demanded a free hand for Bhutto in the West as a *quid pro quo* for conceding Mujib's demands in the East.

This was the bait that Mujib could hardly reject and his acceptance of the offer alienated his support in the West as the political parties opposed to Bhutto were not happy to be bulldozed into decisions which they would not like. Moreover, many of them had serious reservations about this "upstart" boiled shirt politician.

Once the agreement on principals was reached the economic and constitutional experts who came with President Yahya sat down to draft the constitution. Referring to this stage Rehman Sobhan writes: "Some debate over the basis for transferring power was resolved when the leading constitutional experts and lawyers of Pakistan and the one time High Commissioner in India, Mr A.K. Brohi gave an opinion that the Indian Independence Act gave a precedent for transfer of power by Presidential proclamation. While semantic as opposed to substantive points remained, Yahya's team never indicated that there was a point beyond which they could not accommodate the Awami League." Apparently there was no scope for a breakdown of the talks. Yahya Khan issued no ultimatum or minimum basis for settlement. Mujib conceded almost a free hand to Bhutto in the West and also agreed to accept Yahya as a President for the interim period. Against these concessions he expected his authority to be accepted in the East.

The Awami League team waited for the final drafting session of the proclamation on March 25 but the expected call from General Pirzada never came. Instead, the Presidential Adviser, M.M. Ahmed, flew to Karachi without waiting to see the response of the Awami League to his amendments, indicating that the junta had already thought of bullets as a substitute for talks.

All the while, Yahya was buying time so that the reinforcement work could be completed before the final crackdown. There are two theories current in Bangladesh. One is that Mujib was decoyed by Yahya and the Awami League had no idea that the

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military crackdown was imminent. The other is, that even though Mujib was aware of the military build-up he could not do anything but talk; he too was playing for time. It was Maulana Bhasani who maintains that the Awami League leaders were too naive and they were so optimistic that some of them even placed orders for sherwanis as part of the ministerial equipment.

In all fairness to Mujib it can be said that his only failure was not contacting the Bengali elements in the army or the East Bengal Regiment. That he was aware of the military build-up, there is no doubt. But he was not sure of the nature of the crackdown. His impression was that the army would behave the way they used to behave in the British days, arresting politicians and breaking resistance where it was intense, and the struggle would continue in the next phase.

His other difficulty, to my mind, was that the politicians in India as well as in Pakistan never tried to brainwash the army. In the West, the politicians played into the hands of the army and in the East the Pakistan Army officers came from the Bengali families which cared little for down-to-earth politics. In my talks with the officers of the Bengal Regiment in Dacca and in other sectors after the liberation and before, when the fighting and the war of attrition was going on, I had the impression that they were also a little bitter about the whole thing. They felt that if they had been taken into confidence, the genocide in Bangladesh could have been avoided as the Pakistan Army stations in East Pakistan could have been easily wiped out by attacks. But the politicians could not trust the army, even if they were Bengalis, and the army was not sure where they would land in case they cast their lot with the politicians.

It can't be denied that the bourgeoisie intellectual leadership of the Awami League never thought in terms of revolution. They thought that the fight would be through constitutional means. In short, they had before them the example of the Indian struggle for independence against the British. They did not know what havoc could be let loose in the name of Islam and for preserving the "integrity" of Pakistan, which after all was an Islamic Republic. Secondly, the Punjabi constituents who formed the bulk of the Pakistan Army had no social links with the minority community. To them Jihad was much more important; only

the targets this time were the *kafirs* and infidels who had been spoiled by generations of Hindu culture.

Referring to permanent revolution in Pakistan, Tariq Ali wrote:

Despite the economic strength the Pakistani bourgeoisie has not been able to develop a strong social base. It has had to rely on the bureaucracy to preserve and defend its class interests and this has prevented the emergence of a classic bourgeoisie in West Pakistan. In the Eastern Wing the situation was even more deplorable. The people were more pious than the people in the West, suffered more than their Western counterparts but were not taken in by the idea of *jehad*. All they wanted was to live in peace and fashion their lives in the way their fathers and forefathers had done.

But this placid, uncomplaining people of East Pakistan who accept every calamity of nature with philosophic fortitude had hidden springs of violence deep within. But you have to know the point of no-more-argument when the *hesho* or *dao* (sharp weapon typical of East Bengal) would flash and you would be dead meat. And this is where the West Pakistanis made their first egregious blunder. These people had reached the end of the tether when Yahya came forward with his devious scheme of grand betrayal to "sort them out."

The whole economy of East Pakistan was crippled by that time by general strikes. All the government offices were closed as the employees stayed away from offices; banks were not operating, food godowns were closed forcing the army to go on further rationed diet, train services came to a standstill, airlines were not operating and the Post and Telegraph offices were not ticking either. In short, the Bengalis were showing their military masters that they were ready to pay the price. Curfew was imposed but it was obeyed more in the violation. When the army tried to act and killed some people, the demonstrators killed some of the troops with their bare hands. The stooges of the army were afraid. Pleas for reinforcement were flashed to Islamabad. With reinforcements came the "butcher of the Bengalis," the steely-eyed General Tikka Khan. His first assurance to Yahya was: "I will

teach them a lesson within 48 hours." Yahya believed him. There was no reason why he should not have. The little Bengalis would never stand up before the army if it meant business. But they were wrong. Yahya was wrong. Tikka was wrong.

A product of a  
training camp



"Rahmat Ali" ↓



Guerrillas in the making a  
training camp (Above right)





Sheikh Mujibur Rahman



"Mohammad Ali"

Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan B



## CHAPTER SIX

### On the Guerrilla Trail

As early as 1930 Mao Tse-tung summarised his guerrilla war in two succinct statements:

- 1 [We] divide our forces to arouse masses.  
[We] concentrate to deal with the enemy.
- 2 The enemy advances; we retreat;  
the enemy camps, we harass;  
the enemy tires, we attack;  
the enemy retreats; we pursue.

The war in Bangladesh, when it broke out, was neither a guerrilla war, nor a conventional one. It was a mass upsurge against the well-oiled military machine of Pakistan built with foreign aid, poised to hit at its own people. It amounted to cold butchery. In one or two isolated outposts and garrisons, the human wave tactics paid off but the total loss of civilian lives against the lives of a handful of Pakistani soldiery was shocking. The lack of any coordination between the regular Bengal Regiment and the para-military forces like the EPR, Police and the *Ansars* and the Awami League volunteers created confusion in Indian minds. And the question of help was quietly shelved. The Indian leaders knew that there was the opportunity to break Pakistan and to end the military confrontation for good. But how strong was the people's resentment against the military rule? Who would vouch for that? I remember going to an Indian border outpost in the first week of April hoping to cross over to Bangladesh. Our BSF officer told me that it was safe to cross over, but he

could not give any guarantee that some of the EPR people would not shoot at me. Just then a contact man came from the other side to the BSF outpost and told the officer "they have come." To my query he said that some of the EPR boys wanted to talk to him. I asked him if I could string along. He said, "Yes, but you should never stand in our line of firing, and dive if you have to into the nearest bushes." He did not meet the EPR boys where they wanted to meet him but met them a 100 yards away where the field of fire was excellent and I could be covered along with him. Two BSF jawans took positions behind two raised mounds covering the officer and me. I was introduced to the three EPR constables. They looked a sorry trio. They had come to ask for some arms and food. They did not know what had happened to their families, neither had they any information about what had happened to their unit. They were staying inside Bangladesh but would have been glad to cross over at the first opportunity. They were the most demoralised people I had ever met. They did not come with their weapons but said that even if they were able to use their rifles they were not sure they would get ammunition after the first few rounds. The hostility was totally forgotten and the BSF jawans who by then had come out of their covers shared some food with the EPR boys. This was how a beginning was made—with mutual trust.

The events in Bangladesh at the beginning cannot be called war, much less a guerrilla war. In military jargon, the Pakistan Army had been deployed on IS duty (Internal Security Duties). Law and order had broken down in East Pakistan and the Pakistan Government deployed the army to restore them. It is true that the armed conflict which eventually led to the disruption of the State of Pakistan was not war within the meaning of International Law. To be war, the contention must be between States. Thus, the contention between the raiders under Dr Jameson and the former South African Republic in January 1896 was not war. Nor is a confrontation with insurgents or with pirates a war. On the other hand, a civil war breaks out when two opposing parties within a State take recourse to arms for the purpose of obtaining power in the State or when a large portion of the population of a State rises in arms against the legitimate government. Such a civil war need not be a war from the beginning.

or become war at all in the technical sense of the term, but it may become war through the recognition of the contending parties or of the insurgents as a belligerent power.

It may be appropriate to describe the situation in Bangladesh as a law and order situation first, next a civil war, a guerrilla war and lastly, a full-scale war. When the Pakistan Army tried to enforce its "administration" and some people resisted, a law and order situation can be said to have developed. When the people revolted and Pakistan tried to crush the revolt it became a war. When the people declared independence and began to fight the army in occupation, through hit and run tactics and sabotage, the character had changed to guerrilla war. Later, when the combined liberation forces of India and Bangladesh marched in, following the pre-emptive Pakistani attack, it was a full-scale war with no holds barred and no arms sheathed. Looking back, it seems strange that the Awami League can take credit only for its fight against the Pakistan Army in the first contingency. By defying authority they invited the Pakistan Army action without any second line of defence. In later stages, the army itself provoked a civil war when it started liquidating the EBR and EPR personnel and the police as well as civilians. Then only it became the target of the guerrillas who sprung up in all corners of the country. And lastly, by attacking India, Pakistan helped the struggle to reach the final stage.

We shall confine our discussions in this chapter to the guerrilla war in Bangladesh. In all the years of border vigilance, the Border Security Force of India and the East Pakistan Rifles had never been on friendly terms. The BSF was created in December 1965, at the worst period of Indo-Pakistan relations just after the war. Since then the two forces had been standing guard eyeball to eyeball, outpost to outpost. There had been border skirmishes, cases of firing and kidnapping. Occasional flag meetings at different levels failed to iron out major differences and at best, these meetings helped to maintain an unstable peace. In the last week of March, however, reports of the Pakistan Army crackdown on the EPR had trickled in and the first overtures were made by the shaky EPR soldiers to the BSF.

Fortunately for Bangladesh, the resources for a guerrilla war were considerable. The riverine country, the swamps and the

they had to sleep on wet ground and sit for hours under the "ground sheet," not always appreciating that this was part of their guerrilla training.

Commando groups in regular armies are often taught to sleep on trees and live on snakes for days together. The *Mukti Bahini* boys were taught this too. And soon they developed a sense of pride in their status as armed guerrillas sneering at the mercenaries in the Pakistan Army, who would not come out of fortified bunkers and could not live without *gosth* (meat) and booze. Gradually they became fond of "action" and would volunteer for night raids. The arms with them were mostly those that the EBR and EPR had brought with them. The Chinese small arms that they had brought with them had to be used sparingly as the ammo and spares were in very short supply. Most of the raids were carried out by the *Mukti* soldiers during the night; the daylight hours were for sleep, rest and planning. At first, there were "safe raids" on LC (lines of communication) of the enemy, outside the enemy's reach. This gave the *Mukti* boys courage, confidence and a sense of purpose. In the second phase, small raids were planned against installations behind the enemy lines. These bold raids gradually mounted in number and intensity and the *Muktees*, as the Pakistan Army used to call them, were even ready to lay a siege on small enemy concentrations.

Within three months of training, six weeks of intensive course and six weeks of operations in the field, they were able to perfect the guerrilla tactics of surprise attack, quick retreat and effacing themselves in the population after hiding their weapons. On one occasion near Bhurungamari in Rangpur, I saw half a dozen *Mukti Bahini* boys, attacking two Pakistan Army trucks with grenades, small arms and rifles. They took positions on a field full of bushes which ended near a small wall. When the trucks came, the grenade attack was made on the one behind. Two direct hits. When the first truck stopped and the men scrambled out, they were mowed down by withering fire from the wall and grenade attacks took care of what was left. Within minutes of the incident the guerrillas were mixing with the people in

training camps was about 50, the output was considerable though there were many more who could not be enrolled and kept hanging around the *Mukti Bahini* bases. Referring to the training facilities, the Bangladesh Prime Minister, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in his address to the officers and men of the Indian Army on the final day of their pull-out from Bangladesh said on 12 March 1972:

In the darkest hour of our history when the people of my country were fighting against the barbarous attack of the Pakistani Armed Forces, Indian Armed Forces stood by them, helped them, gave them military training, supplied them arms and ammunition.... Let me express my deep sense of gratitude to you....

The public reference to the training of the guerrillas by the Indian Army for the first time by a person no less than the Prime Minister of Bangladesh set at rest the speculations about supply of arms, ammunition and imparting training to the *Mukti Bahini*. Though not in the same tone, but in the same context, General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan also accused India of training the guerrillas. In an interview with *Newsweek*, Yahya accused India of training the guerrillas in at least 23 organised camps. In the same tone he also threatened to "teach a lesson to that woman," language not merely intemperate but boorish. This was in October 1971, when the training was almost complete.

The refugee camps were the ideal recruiting ground for the *Mukti* soldiers since they could find enough men, who had lost almost everything. But during this period there was hardly any need to conscript, as there were enough fit and eager volunteers to join the training camps. I was told by a Bangladesh Member of the National Assembly that everyday he had to write recommendations to sector commanders in favour of young men for a chance in the *Mukti Bahini*. It is true, in the beginning there were camps which possessed only ten aluminium plates for use by well over a hundred. Later, the ration supplies greatly improved though initially one square meal of rice and *dal* (pulses) was the most one could aspire for. The camp inmates had to pass through a very difficult period and the days were frustrating;

thousands of hamlets were rich in manpower resources and were potential guerrilla hideouts. The country and the people helped the recruitment of bands of guerrillas. The best help came from the East Bengal Regiment officers who were trained and natural leaders. They were full-fledged army officers, some of them had fought against the crack Indian Army in the western sector, and they were trained in the use of sophisticated weapons and tactics of guerrilla and commando actions, well-versed in the technique of handling men and equipment and experts in demolition and repairs. Above all they were battle-inoculated. They had access to the *topekhlana* (armoury) and in some places were in battalion strength.

The EBR officers and men were not averse to occasional guerrilla raids. Their help in training other Bangladesh boys was invaluable. The biggest advantage of the Bangladesh fighters was not only the knowledge of the terrain but the existence of sanctuaries just across the border. Mrs Gandhi has declared in public meetings that among the pledges redeemed by her was helping the people of Bangladesh in their struggle for freedom. Once the fighters understood that they would not be arrested or handed back by India to the marauding army if they crossed over, the guerrilla warfare of hit and run got a new lease of life.

All along the 4,000 kilometre Indo-Bangladesh border regular and irregular guerrilla camps sprang up. For example, the Tentulia area in Rangpur provided an ideal sanctuary to the patriots. Surrounded on three sides by Indian territory, this 80 square kilometre area in Bangladesh was safe even from Pakistani air attacks. No Pakistani aircraft could attack this salient without violating Indian territory. As already mentioned, there are about 60,000 villages in Bangladesh and the Pakistan Army could hardly visit a fraction of them, much less guard them all. The problem of a guerrilla base, therefore, was not insoluble. All guerrilla units must be able to live off the land, getting supplies and rations from the local people. For the Bangladesh guerrillas, this posed no problem, with eager villagers voluntarily offering them food and shelter on most occasions. The problem of arms supply and training had also been taken care of by friendly countries. At least four batches of trainees "passed out" excluding a batch of Commissioned Officers. Considering that the number of regular

training camps was about 50, the output was considerable though there were many more who could not be enrolled and kept hanging around the *Mukti Bahini* bases. Referring to the training facilities, the Bangladesh Prime Minister, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in his address to the officers and men of the Indian Army on the final day of their pull-out from Bangladesh said on 12 March 1972:

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they had to sleep on wet ground and sit for hours under the "ground sheet," not always appreciating that this was part of their guerrilla training.

Commando groups in regular armies are often taught to sleep on trees and live on snakes for days together. The *Mukti Bahini* boys were taught this too. And soon they developed a sense of pride in their status as armed guerrillas sneering at the mercenaries in the Pakistan Army, who would not come out of fortified bunkers and could not live without *gosli* (meat) and booze. Gradually they became fond of "action" and would volunteer for night raids. The arms with them were mostly those that the EBR and EPR had brought with them. The Chinese small arms that they had brought with them had to be used sparingly as the ammo and spares were in very short supply. Most of the raids were carried out by the *Mukti* soldiers during the night; the daylight hours were for sleep, rest and planning. At first, there were "safe raids" on LC (lines of communication) of the enemy, outside the enemy's reach. This gave the *Mukti* boys courage, confidence and a sense of purpose. In the second phase, small raids were planned against installations behind the enemy lines. These bold raids gradually mounted in number and intensity and the *Muktees*, as the Pakistan Army used to call them, were even ready to lay a siege on small enemy concentrations.

Within three months of training, six weeks of intensive course and six weeks of operations in the field, they were able to perfect the guerrilla tactics of surprise attack, quick retreat and effacing themselves in the population after hiding their weapons. On one occasion near Bhurungamari in Rangpur, I saw half a dozen *Mukti Bahini* boys, attacking two Pakistan Army trucks with grenades, small arms and rifles. They took positions on a field full of bushes which ended near a small wall. When the trucks came, the grenade attack was made on the one behind. Two direct hits. When the first truck stopped and the men scampered out, they were mowed down by withering fire from the wall and grenade attacks took care of what was left. Within minutes of the incident the guerrillas were mixing with the people in the local marketplace and one of them was present when the reinforcement arrived and sought direction from the local people about the place of the incident.

There were also occasions, when the local people, afraid of army reprisals, prevented the *Mukti* guerrillas from operating in their area. However, in any partisan war such mass reprisals become almost inevitable, where the population is either neutral or hostile; but ultimately the oppression often arouses sympathy for the guerrilla cause. So in the later stage, whenever there was an "action" by the guerrillas, the villages around the area would be deserted for days and quite often the Pakistan Army would come and burn them. Like the guerrillas, the local people too became adept in the "hide and seek" game. The Pakistan Government maintained throughout that the guerrilla actions were the work of Indian infiltrators. When they failed to reach the guerrillas and came to the conclusion that the guerrillas took sanctuary in India, the Pakistan Army took to shelling Indian territory.

But that drew more fire from the Indian Border Security Force than they had ever expected. When the Pakistan Army fanned out near the Indian border to prevent infiltration it faced the Indian Army which had by now been posted all along the border. It was more in the nature of a sympathetic movement. But before the army came close to the borders, the BSF bore the brunt of Pakistani shelling. Unfortunately, in the extensive area of Bangladesh, the 60,000-odd Pakistani soldiers were sucked in like ink by a blotting paper and they could hardly block the infiltrators. One captured Pakistan Army officer told me in seething rage: "Look chaps, you have sent over three dozen veteran army officers, demolition experts and frogmen to work right under our noses in Dacca, Chittagong and other areas and they being Bengalis, we could not catch them." This must have been an exaggeration, for the Indian Army sources declared openly that "professional help inside Bangladesh territory" was never given before the green signal came from the Army Headquarters following Mrs Indira Gandhi's clearance. But professional training was certainly given to the *Mukti* boys.

By the middle of April when the Pakistan Army was almost on the border, I entered Bangladesh territory with a photographer friend of mine. Suddenly a young officer of the Bengal Regiment appeared from nowhere. Satisfied with our identity, he gave us a map of the safe route. In return, he asked for some pictures

of a bridge *en route* taken from below. I understood the purpose but still could not but ask him why he wanted it. He smiled and put it bluntly: "We are going to blow up that bridge and we need some photographs to know exactly the span and the support of the bridge." On another occasion, I was given a kit to be delivered five miles inside Bangladesh to a certain person. I took the heavy bag casually. It was not even sealed. The contents inside were uncomfortably hard on my back. So I opened and had a look. The bag was full of hand grenades. I was obviously scared, but the pins never went off and the delivery was made. The next night those grenades were put to best use. Happily, the guerrillas had learned to dish out as well as they got.

I remember another occasion near a border outpost in Jalpaiguri. An Awami League volunteer came rushing to a friend of mine, with whom he had some political and ideological affinity, for some six inch mortar shells. He did not know that six inch mortars did not exist anywhere. I cite this example to show how, on the one hand the political leadership had no military orientation at all, and on the other, that the military elements were devoid of any political guidance. On several occasions in the forward outposts I heard strong remarks from the *Mukti Bahini* and EBR against the political leaders who were not sharing the same hardship as they were. This was natural from people under strain and the regular army units of the *Mukti Bahini*, composed of the East Bengal Regiment, were perhaps the most disciplined group in the whole Bangladesh Army. The reason for indiscipline among some of the *Mukti Bahini* units later could be traced to their lack of political orientation and educational background.

On the whole, the guerrilla army who fought against the Pakistan Army in Bangladesh, are not guerrillas covered by the definition of Mao Tse-tung or Che Guevera. They fought because they had no alternative course of action. They were forced to fight by the Pakistan Army which had unleashed barbaric brutalities on their own people. The treatment meted out to suspected *Mukti Bahini* boys by the Pakistan Army was equally harsh and gruesome. These boys without any uniform are not covered under the Geneva Convention and their attacks against the army would be a crime; the penalty was death before a firing squad. This happened in Yugoslavia against the Germans in the partisan war

when neither side would take prisoners. But in Bangladesh it was a little different. If the *Mukti Bahini* boys captured Pakistani soldiers, they were usually well looked after.

"To make a revolution, bourgeoisie, democratic or communist, and to fight a people's war and be victorious, it is imperative to adhere to the policy of self-reliance, rely on the strength of the masses in one's own country, and prepare to carry on to fight independently even where all material aid from outside is cut off. If one does not operate by one's own efforts, does not independently ponder and solve the problems of revolution in one's own country, and does not rely on the strength of the masses, but leans only on foreign aid—even though this be aid from socialist countries which believe in revolution—no victory can be won, or be consolidated even if it is won." This was Lin Piao's theory of revolutionary war. Though the freedom fighters of Bangladesh could hardly have read Lin Piao, they did *exactly* the same; they fought and though later they took help from India, they tried to rely on themselves.

But there was no battle communication between the EBR and EPR units who had escaped attacks by the army and there was no stock of arms and ammunitions available to them. The absence of transmitters among the guerrillas was compensated for largely by All India Radio which informed the people of Bangladesh about what was happening. This help offset to a large extent the limitations of the freedom fighters.

Nevertheless, it is true that organised attacks against army posts and sabotage work could only be undertaken once the government was formed and the people of Bangladesh as well as the guerrillas knew from whom to take the directives. If political motivation was totally absent in the Bangladesh guerrillas, desperation and inhuman tortures on their kith and kin inside Bangladesh by the Pakistan Army gave them the motivation to fight. They knew that they would have to fight to win; failure would doom them to a life of perpetual misery as refugees in India. And conditions in refugee camps were anything but encouraging.

The first attempt to organise the guerrillas and prepare the people for what was to later become a protracted war of attrition was made on 13 April, 18 days after the Pakistan Army crack-down. The directive broadcasts over the Swadhin Bangla Radio were:

Take all injured to doctors and *kabirajs* [herb doctors] who will attend to them. Punish those who have betrayed the revolution.

Take directives from the local leaders of the Awami League. All youths should report to the nearest Liberation Army Command to receive training and orders.

All headmen should maintain close contacts with the headmen of near by villages keeping them informed about everything.

All government officers in the liberated areas should accept orders from the local Awami League headquarters.

Personnel of the river steam navigation services should not obey the directives broadcast over Radio Pakistan, Dacca, but should be guided by the directives of the Government of Bangladesh.

Follow civil defence measures under the direction of the

liberation force command of your area.

Beware of suspicious characters roaming in your area, and report to the nearest liberation force station as soon as you learn about suspicious movements in your area.

On April 14, Tajuddin Ahmed, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh also issued an appeal to the world for arms to fight the war of liberation. He pleaded that supply of arms and medical help was "a permanent need for Bangladesh today."

Pakistan in its White Paper claimed that India was supplying arms to the rebels and was sending infiltrators inside Bangladesh to attack the Pakistani Army positions and continue the sabotage work. It is doubtful if India had sent arms, but even if she did, she was perfectly within her rights to do so according to a resolution adopted at the United Nations General Assembly during the debate on Rhodesia. The resolution said that all the members of the United Nations should help the people to fight against colonialism in any form, economic or political, and if necessary, should supply the oppressed people with arms. This was a resolution and a directive as well, and if we analyse the political and economic developments taking place in East Pakistan, we can see the worst form of economic exploitation and colonial rule rampant there.

Some arms might have gone to East Pakistan from this side of the border after March 25, but those had mostly been brought by the elements of the EBR and EPR when they took shelter in India after being pursued by the Pakistan Army. When they understood the folly of human wave attacks, which were mostly organised by the Awami League leaders inside Bangladesh, the tactics shifted gradually to sneaking guerrilla raids against the lines of communication, followed by attacks against isolated army posts. The guerrillas formed groups of five to ten and all the raids were conducted at night. The attacks had mostly a nuisance value, making the Pakistan Army realise that they were operating in hostile and uncogenial territory. Many of them said after their capture that they would have been glad to be in West Pakistan rather than rot "in this swamp" of Bangladesh. The major advantage of the guerrilla war in Bangladesh (after independence was declared) was that the average age of the

guerrillas was 17 years. I have seen boys barely 15 with sub-machine guns which they used with deadly effect because they were never scared and did not think about the consequences. I have seen a guerrilla commander slapping a youth of 16 who would not rest or give up his weapons for others to fight. He had been on duty for 72 hours without any rest; he was in every raid voluntarily. When I talked to him later he told me that he had only one ambition in life; to kill as many Pakistani soldiers as possible. His parents had been killed by the army and his sister had been raped. This explains the determined fight by the students among the guerrillas who, even without a clear-cut political motivation, had enough personal animus to fight against the Pakistan Army.

The sabotage work which the guerrillas undertook had the stamp of professionalism. This was partly because quite a large number of engineering students were inducted among the guerrillas. Besides, a large contingent of the Bengal Regiment were sappers.

Writing about the value of sabotage in a guerrilla war, Che Guevera said:

Sabotage is one of the invaluable arms of people that fights in guerrilla form... but this organisation should be directly commanded and oriented by the general staff of the guerrillas, which will be responsible for deciding the industries, communications, or other objectives that are to be attacked.... Sabotage should be of two types: sabotage on a national scale against determined objectives, and local sabotage against lines of combat. Each type of communication can be destroyed in a different way... for example telegraph and telephone poles are easily destroyed by sawing them almost all through, so that at night they appear to be in normal condition; a sudden kick causes one pole to fall and this drags along with it all those that are weak... bridges can be attacked with dynamites ... or the girders with oxy-acetylene blow torch....

I am not sure if they had with them Guevera's handbook on sabotage, but they did their jobs extremely well, even as frogmen at Chittagong harbour did by sinking ships with limpet mines.

The other important aspect of a guerrilla war is propaganda. And the Bangladesh people had no dearth of it. They got help from All India Radio; they also had their own radio for propaganda. The propaganda in a guerrilla war has two definite objectives. It creates a favourable public opinion, and boosts the morale of the fighting forces; and when effective, erodes the morale of the enemy. I was told in Dacca and elsewhere in Bangladesh that the people used to wait for the All India Radio and Bangladesh Radio broadcasts to get a picture of the war. "Often at night we used to take the transistor under the quilt and listen to these banned broadcasts," admitted a veteran Bangladesh journalist to me. All India Radio also used to beam broadcasts in Urdu from the Calcutta station. To make the Pakistan Army listen to these bulletins AIR used to sandwich news headlines between the songs broadcast through the *Vivid Bharati* programme which was popular among the Pakistani troops. Besides, there were the Indian newspapers and foreign journalists who were sympathetic towards the cause of Bangladesh. To be fair to the Indian and international Press, the Bangladesh issue and the struggle of the Bengalis got sympathetic treatment throughout the world. Each foreign journalist I talked to felt in his heart that these oppressed people had every right to get their independence. A journalist told me: "I know India is giving arms... but damn it, why is she not giving more!"

The other aspect of vital importance is intelligence. "Know yourself and your adversary and you will be able to fight a hundred battles without a single disaster." This Chinese aphorism is valuable for guerrilla warfare as the Biblical Psalm or the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya. Nothing gives the combatant forces more help than correct information. And intelligence was almost perfect in this war. The senior Pakistan Army officers I talked to at Dacca shortly after the surrender had one excuse in common to justify defeat; the lack of such perfect intelligence as was available to the *Mukti Bahini* and the Indian Army. "They knew exactly where our bunkers were and the deployed strength of our forces. Often we had seen that the Indian troops had been led behind us in spite of all precautions and their fires were uncannily accurate," said Brigadier Baqr Siddique of the Pakistan Army. Despite the eulogy by the Pakistan Army Brigadier for



the guerrilla intelligence, there are instances of serious misinformation for which the Indian forces had to pay heavily. But the *Mukti Bahini* intelligence had the excuse of inexperience. Not knowing the difference between a platoon and a company they often miscalculated the enemy defence and firepower. These often led to serious consequences.

Then comes training. And there was no dearth of it. The first prerequisite for a guerrilla army is a safe sanctuary. And there could not be anything better than a friendly country with a terrain almost like the local terrain and affording protection from surprise attacks by the enemy. For their safety the guerrillas are often told to sleep in the open and to keep their escape routes well charted before they go to sleep. Though the Bangladesh guerrilla forces had to sleep in the open quite often, the friendly population in the liberated areas gave them shelter and on most occasions the target was within walking distance and they could hit it at night and come back before the first daylight and take rest. A training programme of six months or less is not enough to toughen the guerrillas; for the officers, the period is totally inadequate. But they had to make do with whatever time they had at their disposal. The training was professional because they had the opportunity of having the well trained Bengal Regiment on their side. It is difficult and even imprudent to hazard a guess about the number of trained guerrillas that turned out to fight the Pakistan Army, but Pakistan Army sources say openly that about 100,000 India-trained guerrillas were fighting behind the lines. This is probably an exaggeration. The number must have included the underground student groups who were fighting too and continuing the sabotage work from within the country. It is nevertheless true that infiltration was the easiest thing in Bangladesh since it was surrounded on three sides by Indian territory.

I know of a retired Major of the Indian Army who, when called for active duty, was found missing. He was from East Bengal and the spirit of adventure got the better of him. Without informing his unit he took upon himself the task of organising the guerrillas in the Satkhira sector in Khulna District in Bangladesh and enthused them so much by his personal conduct and valour that they would have followed his lead anywhere without asking

any questions. Many others, officers, pressmen and politicians found themselves involved in a war which was not their own, but the fact that they had been born in East Bengal was enough to goad them into many a reckless action. Apropos the accusation of a Pakistani politician that loyalty of the Hindus was suspect, an Indian official said: "I would have to hound the nine million Hindus who migrated from East Bengal for disloyalty to India, for everyone of them would call East Bengal his own country and home." That he was correct had been proved in this war. Psychologically all the people from East Bengal—Hindus or Muslims—considered it their own war and played their parts according to their own sense of duty.

Referring to the formation of the Bangladesh Army which was later known as *Mukti Fauz* and subsequently *Mukti Bahini* when they were re-inforced by the air force and naval wings, Tajuddin Ahmed said in a radio broadcast on 11 April 1971:

Today a mighty army is being formed around the nucleus of professional soldiers from the Bengal Regiment and EPR who have rallied to the cause of the liberation struggle. These have been joined by the Police, *Ansars* and *Mujahids* and now by thousands of Awami League and other volunteers and are being trained into [a] fighting force ready to use the captured weapons from the defeated West Pakistani mercenaries and fresh arms being purchased from funds collected by our Bengali brothers overseas.

In the Sylhet-Comilla region, we have commissioned Major Khaled Musharraf of the Bengal Regiment to take command of military operations in the region. The courage and daring of his force has already reduced the presence of Pakistan Army to the cantonment of Sylhet and Comilla, where they will soon be liquidated by the closing ring of the Liberation Army.

In Chittagong and Noakhali we have commissioned Major Zia Rahman of the Bengal Regiment to take full command of operations. His heroic defence of Chittagong city against overwhelming odds, which included attacks from the air and sea, will take its place with the defence of Stalingrad in the annals of warfare....In the Mymensingh-Tengail area, we

have commissioned Major Safiullah of the Bengal Regiment to take command of operations in the region....The three commanders have already met and prepared a joint plan of battle designed to mop up surviving pockets of resistance....

In the south-western region, we have commissioned Major Osman of the EPR to take command of the Kushtia-Jessore zone, while Major Jalil has been given charge of Faridpur-Barisal-Khulna-Pathuakhali zone....In north Bengal a unified command is being set up from the forces of the Bengal Regiment and the EPR. Our liberation forces under the command of Major Ahmed pushed out enemy forces from Rajshahi District, Major Nazrul and Major Nawazesh are laying siege to the hard pressed occupation army in Saidpur and Rangpur....

The brilliant success of our fighting forces and the daily additions to their strength in manpower and captured weapons has enabled the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, first announced through Major Zia Rahman, to set up a full-fledged operational base from which it is administering the liberated areas. Whilst the interim capital is located in the liberated area of the western zone, we have set up a regional seat of government located in the liberated area of Sylhet-Comilla zone which is delegated to exercise full and administrative authority over all areas in the eastern region.

This broadcast by Tajuddin Ahmed gave for the first time a clear indication of the shape of things by the middle of April. In fact, all the people mentioned as the sector commanders took upon themselves the task of defending certain areas without any coordination with the other except with Ashabul Haq in Kushtia. There was little apparent link between the top Awami League leaders and the Bengal Regiment or the EPR forces. In the beginning Major Zia, Major Musharraf and others were operating quite independently, they had to in the absence of wireless sets and other lines of communication. Besides, very few of them had contacts with those who had slipped through the Pakistan Army cordon and escaped. It is also true that the top Awami League leaders had very little acquaintance with the EBR officers.

After the liberation, when Commander Jalil, the sector

commander in the Khulna-Faridpur-Barisal-Noakhali sector, revolted "at the instigation of a foreign power," in the words of Colonel Osmani, Commander of the Bangladesh Army, the suspicion that these people were not really known to the leadership was proved. Major Jalil's was a sad attempt at declaring an area in the Sunderban region of Khulna as liberated. He ordered his force of about 2,800 not to surrender their arms when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman gave a general call to all *Mukti Bahini* and *Gana Bahini* forces to surrender arms. The Indian Army was in Bangladesh and under orders from the Bangladesh Prime Minister and the C-in-C, the Bengal Regiment had to move against one of their own units led by a brother officer, almost within a month of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's return. The Indian Army protected the flank while the EBR boys went on disarming the would-be rebel groups led by Major Jalil. Major Jalil was later arrested in Dacca. Subsequent proofs, according to Bangladesh sources, indicate that Major Jalil was in contact with a Western Power. He was alleged to have secretly planned with international backing to take hold of the strife-torn newly independent Bangladesh.

Major Jalil's was the solitary case of mutiny, though other incidents happened in Bangladesh to indicate that the hastily trained and recruited *Mukti Bahini* had neither the discipline nor the mettle of the Bengal Regiment.

The real *Mukti Bahini* which fought by the side of the Indian Army under the command of General Aurora and was known as the Allied Army, came to be formed much later. In April, the resistance was unique, automatic and without any overall strategic plan. The battles fought in the early months of 1971 in all these sections were tactical and not strategic. The strategy was evolved much later in the months of August-September when the Pakistan Army had shown their deployment and their objective was clear.

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

### The Panther Strikes

Modern dictators have a curious habit of putting their future plans on paper and having them published. The classical example, of course, was Hitler. In *Mein Kampf*, written in 1923, Hitler told everybody who was willing to listen, what they had to expect from him. The Japanese were less explicit, but still precise enough; in 1927 they proclaimed their intention of conquering the Far East. Though Ayub Khan and Yahya Khan were chance dictators, without proper nurture, they too laid it on quite thick and it was for the people of Bangladesh and India to foresee what was coming. In truth, the history of dictatorship over the past 20 or 30 years affords little justification for continued incredulity.

Oppress not the cubs of the stranger  
But hail them as sister and brother,  
For though they are little and fussy, it  
May be the Bear is their mother—*Maxims of Balvo*

When the Pakistan military junta let loose the genocide against the people of Bangladesh, they perhaps forgot the maxim and made their greatest miscalculation in not taking into account the depth of Bengali nationalism; possibility of a guerrilla war; India's total involvement in case of a showdown; the failure of their pre-emptive air strike; China's sitting on the fence; the United States' failure to keep up her commitment; India's decisiveness under Mrs Indira Gandhi; and, lastly, the total helplessness of the UN.

March 1, the National Assembly session scheduled for March 3 was postponed. On 25 March 1971 the army crackdown started; and on March 26 Major Zia Rahman declared independence over the captured Chittagong radio starting the first phase of the guerrilla war in "Bangladesh." On March 31, the Indian Parliament expressed its "profound sympathy for and solidarity with the people of East Bengal in their struggle for a democratic way of life." Mrs Gandhi's hands were now free to take decisive action according to the exigencies of the situation.

The Pakistan Army, meanwhile, pressed on with its campaign of terror, loot, arson and rape, forcing millions to take shelter in India. The economic strain became unbearable. The administrative machinery in West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura almost reached the breaking point. Millions fleeing into India jeopardised India's stability; her security was threatened, social harmony undermined, communal harmony severely taxed and all social progress and development programmes came to a standstill. India tried to mobilise international opinion to bring pressure upon Pakistan on the plea that in inflicting atrocities on unarmed people, human rights were being violated. India's 13 ministerial delegations visited 70 countries of the world; the Prime Minister herself met the Big Powers and toured some of the Western and East European countries to explain personally the situation. The international response was limited. India was worried by the military postures of Pakistan. On top of this Pakistan wanted to bring United Nations observers to the India-Pakistan borders in the East and thus transform the conflict, which in effect was a fight between the democratic forces in East Bengal and the military junta of West Pakistan, into an Indo-Pakistan war.

American arms, however, continued to flow into Pakistan, posing a serious threat to India's security. India then concluded the two-year-old negotiation with the Soviet Union and on 9 August 1971, signed the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Co-operation between the two countries. Article 9 of the agreement envisaged mutual consultation in the event of an attack or threat of an attack on either party.

The resistance by the *Mukti Bahini* and the partisans grew



more determined and all semblance of administration in East Bengal broke down. Local population started giving shelter to the partisans and the terrain, with the rivers in spate, the paddy fields and the swamps became their hideouts. They became increasingly bolder and even daylight attacks were planned and executed with meticulous precision. Pakistan reacted in panic; more troops were shipped and flown to suppress the "rebellion" of the 75 million people. Prior to March 1971 Pakistan had in East Bengal the 14 Infantry Division (14 Div.) consisting of four infantry brigades. During February and March, 9 Infantry Division (9 Div.) was also moved to East Bengal. By the end of March 1971 the movement and build-up of 16 Infantry Division (16 Div.) was complete. Pakistan also moved in additional troops equivalent to about a division by March 26. They did not stop there. By the month of May 4,000 personnel of the Frontier Force and 5,000 Pakistani police from the West were inducted into Bangladesh and between May and July 1971, more than 35,000 armed *Razakars* were recruited from among the non-Bengali Muslims to terrorise the countryside and give logistic support to the army in their operations. The martial law administrator also raised 25,000 East Pakistan Civil Armed Forces (EPCF) from among the non-Bengalis and the collaborators among the Bengalis.

So the total strength of the Pakistan Army which fought against India was raised by July 1971 to 35 infantry battalions, one armoured regiment, two armoured squadrons, six artillery regiments and a number of independent mortar and field batteries besides a number of para-military personnel. And they were bent on causing damage in sensitive and vulnerable areas across the Indo-Pakistan border in the East. The Pakistani troops then fanned out towards the Indian border and built up defensive positions, stocked with ammunition and food. In July 1971 Yahya Khan warned India against total war, and to back up his threat to teach India a lesson, war-like preparations also started in the West. The war in the Western front is outside the scope of this book but without a passing reference to it, the offensive in the East would be unintelligible. The primary reason for this was told when I interviewed General A.A.K. Niazi in Dacca Cantonment on 18 December 1971. Niazi. <sup>as</sup>

well as the senior army commanders fighting in the East knew that they were "fighting the battle of West Pakistan on the soil of East Pakistan." Their intention was to "lock as many Indian divisions as possible in a wide area of confrontation so that the massive strength of the Indian Army did not overrun West Pakistan." And it was this consideration which led to the tactical blunders and the apparent strategic mistakes committed by the Pakistan Army in the East. What appeared foolish to our Generals was part of a bigger strategy to save West Pakistan when the military junta of Pakistan knew that East Bengal was lost to them, however massive the troop induction might be.

Pakistan started in the West provocative airspace violations. A Pakistani Mirage aircraft overflew the Srinagar airfield in a reconnaissance flight. Under the pretext of exercise and manoeuvres, various formations in West Pakistan were moved forward from their normal peace station settlements and by September 1971, into the battle locations. Build-up in the Haji Pir commenced in August 1971 when Pakistan's 26 Brigade moved from Sinkiari and Pakistan 21 Infantry Brigade was moved from Jarikhas to border areas north-west of Marala headworks. Pakistan 17 Infantry Division arrived at Gujranwala in the first week of September and Pakistan 105 Independent Brigade Group moved near Suleimanki. By the middle of October, Pakistan's deployment of forces all along the Western border was complete. India had to move up her army to meet the challenge. There were two choices left to India. She could either allow Pakistan to enter her territory and fight the battles at venues of her own choosing, or she could attack in strength without dividing her forces when the war started and get enough lodgements to pressure Pakistan to take her troops back from the vulnerable and sensitive areas in the West where India's defensive positions were at a disadvantage because of terrain and location. One such area was the Chhamb sector where Pakistan made a considerable dent in the 1965 war. The other consideration for India was that at 20 degrees below zero in the winter on the hills of Kashmir and Jammu, it is ten times more difficult to attack and win than to defend one's positions. India would have to think of "offensive defence" instead of "defensive postures."

The stand of China in case of an all out war in Kashmir was also tormenting the Indian mind. The only alternative was to wait till the passes in the Karakoram mountain froze, making it almost impossible for the Chinese to send physical help by sending their troops. This problem was, however, solved by Pakistan for India by attacking in December 1971 instead of in October.

Even when the troops on both sides were in positions from where they could see the whites of each others eyes, Mrs Gandhi took the calculated risk of leaving the country and visiting some of the Big Powers to bring pressure on Pakistan and avoid the bloody confrontation. When Mrs Gandhi left there were disgruntled murmurs within the country comparing her visit abroad to that of Nehru to Ceylon on the eve of the Chinese attack in 1962, when both the Defence Minister and the Prime Minister were away from the country. In spite of India's gesture to prevent the war Pakistan continued the escalation. Indian territories in Meghalaya, West Bengal and Tripura were being shelled continuously by 130 mm batteries, causing damage to civilian lives and property.

Pakistan mounted abusive propaganda saying that they were destroying the guerrilla bases inside India. On the night of 4-5 November 1971, Pakistani troops started shelling Kamalpur in Tripura and the guerrillas and the personnel of the BSF had to enter Pakistani territory to silence the guns at the cost of considerable loss of lives. Pakistan also shelled Belonia town and launched mortar attacks across the Cooch Behar border and fired across the border at Tura; then its army shelled Balurghat.

If Pakistan had confined border violations to the Eastern region it could have, perhaps, justified them by saying that the violations were to run down the partisans. But instead of confining their shellings to the Eastern sector, they also mounted probing attacks in the West. Between 4 and 6 November 1971, there were 12 border violations in Jammu and Kashmir. From 25 March 1971 to November 15 there were over 600 military intrusions or border incidents committed by Pakistani forces on the India-East Bengal border, while India had to lodge 1,980 complaints against cease-fire violations in the

Kashmir sector during the same period. Let us take a single day, 7 November 1971, to see what type of provocations they were offering:

On November 7, Pakistan Army started firing towards the Indian villages of Rahimpur and Gourangala under Kalamchoura Police Station in Tripura. Ten artillery shells and 14 bombs landed inside Indian territory.

The same day Pakistani Army opened fire from LMGs towards the Indian village of Gourangal in Tripura. Pakistanis mortared and shelled Mandabad village in Tripura.

Village Kasba in Tripura came under shelling the same evening.

Another village, Shimana, was also shelled simultaneously; the same happened to two other villages, Sidhai and another India BOP.

Pakistan used LMGs, MMGs and two inch mortars to shell Shabrum, a Tripura village; then came Belonia, Chandanagore, Kamalpur, Kailashar and other areas; in all 17 villages were shelled in one day.

For Pakistan, time was running out. They were being harassed inside the country by the *Mukti Bahini* guerrillas and wherever they shelled Indian territory they got return fire because the Indian attitude had hardened by this time. A responsive, democratic government had to act under popular pressure; the civilian casualties owing to Pakistani shelling forced the Government of India to take action. In the Eastern sector, the Indian Army did not come up to the border obeying the terms of agreement between India and Pakistan which laid down that ground forces should not come within five kilometres of the border. But as pressure mounted, the BSF personnel were gradually relieved or brought under the command of the regular army in India. But the commanders of the Indian Army were against any hasty action.

This was also made clear when the Chief of Army Staff, General S.H.F.J. Manekshaw, is reported to have been requested by the Prime Minister of India to give a military appraisal of the situation in April, in case India had to go to war with Pakistan.

He is reported to have told Mrs Gandhi that India was not in a position to wage war within six months. If India decided to fight Pakistan before October, it would be a repetition of the 1965-stalemate. Intelligence reports at that time indicated that Pakistan would attack India and contingency plans were prepared accordingly. The Prime Minister was told that to solve the logistic and other problems to gear a defensive army to prepare for counter-attack, it would take a minimum of six months.

The actual war virtually started on 21 November 1971 at Boyra, about 170 kilometres from Calcutta. Pakistan infantry supported by tanks and artillery launched an offensive on the *Mukti Bahini* which was holding a liberated area around Boyra, about eight kilometres inside Bangladesh territory. The defence of this area rested with the HQ 107 Infantry Brigade of Pakistan under Brigadier Malik Hayat Khan. He had under him the 22 Frontier Force, 6 Punjab, 15 Frontier Force and 12 Punjab. Pakistani armour under heavy artillery advanced towards the Indian border near Boyra threatening Indian defences which were built all along the Boyra salient jutting into Pakistan. Their shellings killed a number of civilians. India had to take action because she had information that the Pakistan Army was also moving heavy artillery which would be able to shell more than 15 miles inside Indian territory. The local commander had no option but to counter-attack. In this connection it is appropriate to mention that when the Indian Army and the BSF went inside East Pakistani territory to silence the guns off Kamalpur near Tripura, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi told the Indian Parliament that the army had been asked to enter Pakistan territory wherever necessary in "self-defence." So, clearance was given and Indian armour moved inside Bangladesh to meet the Pakistanis on their territory.

When the Pakistani attack was launched on Boyra, an Indian battalion column eliminated a Pakistani position at Mazlia, opposite Boyra, thus exposing the flank of the attacking Pakistan Army. In the fight at Mazlia, Pakistani soldiers suffered heavy casualties; about 70 of them were killed. In the battle of Boyra, which was later called the battle of Chowghacha and Garibpur, Pakistan lost 13 tanks, an unlucky number for Pakistan, and to extricate the forces and armour called for air strikes. Four

Sabrejets were pressed into attack by Pakistan but all they had to show was one civilian killed and two wounded.

Pakistan continued the attacks by air the next day to hit the Indian armour which was on its way back to Indian territory. The F-86 fighters crossed into Indian territory at Boyra and attacked Indian troops at positions thrice—at 10 A.M., 10.15 A.M. and at 3 P.M. At the time of the last intrusion, Indian Gnat interceptors attacked the Sabres and three of the enemy aircraft were downed. Two Pakistani pilots baled out and were captured.

In the last two major wars, in 1962 against China and in 1965 against Pakistan, India had learnt many lessons which a peacetime army would have never learnt. These related to the development of planning and managerial capabilities in the defence sector. The smoothness and effectiveness with which the entire planning, logistic and tactical, was done cannot but earn praise for the services. The flexibility in planning and resilience in the managerial structure helped to achieve the objective much quicker; it helped the local commanders to devise tactical plans and often alter the plans made earlier at Headquarters, which was almost absent in the two previous wars. The rapidity with which the crisis developed, the fast escalation in the border situation, the international political power balance, and the shifting alliances made it imperative for India to evolve a dynamic policy instead of a merely static strategy.

The Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister took upon themselves the task of putting India's point of view before the world; they sought to neutralise the Big Powers and where they failed they made new friends to checkmate Big Power influence. When 104 members of the UN voted for cease-fire, there was despondency in India that these Powers should have equated India with Pakistan which was the aggressor. What they failed to see was that these members were more concerned to stop the bush-fire war which had the potentiality of becoming a major conflagration with Big Power involvement. It was not a vote against India but an appeal for peace. Affecting as it did every aspect of our national life, the crisis put to test our institutions, our values, our coherence and mutual relationships, and finally the national decision-making apparatus.

Our defence apparatus had been fashioned over the years to

repel any attacks and thus make the cost of aggression too high for any prospective aggressor. In this respect we hold views almost identical with those of the Chinese. No Power in the world can overrun the vast Indian territory without stretching its supply lines and overreaching itself, thus inviting ultimate defeat. India's experience taught their leaders to expect attacks from the North and from the West but India was never prepared for the unique type of aggression caused by forcing millions of homeless destitutes, looted, raped and persecuted by a bloody, lusty army to jeopardise not only the national stability but also to strain the national potential to the point of complete breakdown of the economic system with its threat of a cataclysmic social upheaval. By trying to solve a basically political problem militarily, Pakistan created social problems in India unparalleled in human history. Apart from these, the birth of the partisans, their seeking shelter in India where they met people who spoke the same language and shared the same sentiments and who had been persecuted much in the same way a decade before, created new problems which were difficult to solve.

The overall threat to the country extended over three Army Commands, two Naval Commands and three Air Commands. And the potentially active theatres were separated by over 1,000 miles. The peculiar logistic problems were even more difficult to solve than those in the Korean or Viet Nam wars. To take tanks to Belonia in Tripura from Avadi would mean a travel of almost 2,000 miles by land and involve four railway networks. To do it quietly, which all army commanders would like to do, would place formidable problems of re-arranging railway schedules. Though the brunt would be borne by the army, perfect coordination with the para-military forces like the BSF was necessary. Besides, to solve part of the logistic problem both the navy and the air force would have to offset the Pakistani advantage of "interior lines." Thus the navy was called in to look after the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. The air force had to be taxed to its maximum to establish complete air superiority in the Indian sky.

To effect the desired coordination, the Prime Minister, the Defence Minister, the Foreign Minister, the Chiefs of Staff and the concerned civil officials had to meet almost every day.

As the crisis was omnidimensional and the impact of it ranged over wide areas, the responses of the country had to be weighed very carefully and a whole range of contingent possibilities had to be anticipated. This was done through informal interaction between the services command and the political leaders. The changing international situation gradually limited the choices before the country. Every step had to be analysed and the next step thought out well in advance. India anticipated a war with Pakistan, even if she tried to avoid it. India knew the value of peace, the strain the increasing defence budget was placing on the country, and knew too that a war should be brief but a potent interlude in the continuum of political relationships in the subcontinent. So the leadership had to consider the preparedness of the defence forces, the task to be assigned to them, the nature of the campaign; even the quantum of force to be applied, targets to be bombed, and even the motivation and behaviour of the troops. Indian leadership knew that the army was frustrated by the periodical border clashes with Pakistan, which gained nothing. Take Kargil in Jammu. This strategic hill feature dominating the Leh-Srinagar Road was captured three times by India after considerable loss of life, but had to be returned every time India and Pakistan sat across the table. So the army, however subservient it might be to civil power, wanted to fight it out and put an end to the vexed border problems, whether in the West or in the East.

In view of the enormous distance between the two theatres and the variable nature of the threat in each, perfect planning had to be done for effective and proper utilisation of the available resources with the three services. The situation in the Eastern theatre was completely different from that in the West. Here the army had to take into consideration the alienation of the Pakistani armed forces from the local population, the weaker air arm, the need for speedy relief and rehabilitation of the refugees and the question of perfect coordination with the *Mukti Bahini* and also part of its training and liaison. The army had to plan a highly mobile war in the Eastern theatre which was undermining the country's stability, to break the Pakistani resistance as fast as possible, to demoralise and capture them to be used as levers in a settlement and to avoid international



involvement in a protracted war. The other important factor was the question of initiative. Since India decided not to attack first, she had to make contingency plans against a first pre-emptive attack by Pakistan in the Western sector. This meant an enormous amount of precaution to try limiting the damage that might be caused by Pakistan's initial attack, and to devise both defensive and offensive plans to counter-attack and destroy Pakistan's initiative and damage its war-making potential. If the overall strategic plan for India was the liberation of Bangladesh, the tactical plan involved destruction of Pakistan's logistic support and supply lines. And it was decided to employ the navy for this tactical support. The Indian Navy did a wonderful job of immobilising Karachi port, sinking a Pakistani submarine and damaging almost all the ports in East Pakistan so that neither troops nor supplies could be brought in. The overall plan needed utmost cooperation among the three services and this was achieved through the Chiefs of Staff Committee.

In evolving the contingency plans in each theatre the sector commanders were given resources, briefed about the objectives, told of the threat and they came up with their plans for action. These were discussed, modified, approved and finally sent back to them. The other important factor was the effective use of the IAF both in tactical and strategic support. To effect perfect coordination and to avoid the mistakes of 1965, liaison officers from the IAF were stationed at the command, corps and division levels with effective communication links with air formations and operational command structures to get the desired results. Similar coordination was also achieved between the Naval and the Air Commands. The massiveness of the task could be understood from the fact that the 1971 war involved the Western, Eastern and Southern Army Commands; three Air Commands—Eastern, Western, and Central; and two Naval Commands—Eastern and Western.

While India was till the last minute trying to avoid war, Pakistan was preparing for attacks on 3 December 1971; to others Pakistan played into the hands of India and gave her the satisfaction of defeating and breaking her into two. Whatever may be the interpretation, Pakistan attacked on December 3. While the Prime Minister was addressing a public meeting at

Calcutta, the Defence Minister was at Patna, and the Finance Minister in Bombay. Pakistani planes intruded into Indian territory and started simultaneous bombings at almost all the forward airfields at 5.47 P.M. At the same time heavy artillery and armour started to rumble. Pakistan was at war again, exactly six years after the 1965 stalemate. They bombed Amritsar, Pathankot, Srinagar. Avantipur, Uttaril, Jodhpur, Ambala and Agra. Pakistani artillery shelled a wide sector including Suleimanki, Khem Karan, Poonch and other areas.

It is interesting to analyse here why the Pakistani attempt to immobilise our airfields failed. Pakistan went for a pre-emptive strike and simultaneously bombed many airfields, yet the attack failed to achieve the objective. On Pakistan's side there were two major mistakes; one was to send the attackers in failing light thus limiting their efforts to strategic target bombings rather than tactical bombings; the other was not using the entire Pakistani Air Force. Pakistan sent only ten Starfighters and six Sabrejets though Pakistan had Canberras, Mirage 3Es and B-57 bombers. The reason perhaps is that Pakistan was diffident, though she had more advanced aircraft than India. Yet another reason might be that they wanted to have a second line of defence in the reserve aircraft and wanted to send them early next morning. Still another mistake was to think that India would keep all her aircraft on the runways or in the hangers at strategic airfields.

If the world had learnt anything from the six-day Arab-Israeli war it was that the enemy must not be allowed the initial advantage of a pre-emptive air-strike and he must not be given respite to get organised. After the first attack it took India some time to gather aircraft from the dispersed airfields. India attacked the same night and continued to batter Pakistani positions through long-range strategic target bombings. India, a jump ahead of Pakistan, had anticipated a sudden air attack and had accordingly dispersed the planes from the known airfields to remote and unknown ones.

If Pakistan chose the wrong hour to attack, the day of the attack was well selected; it was a Friday and being *Jumma* would strengthen the idea of Jihad against Hindu India. The other reason was more subtle. Attacking on Friday evening

Pakistan made sure that in the next two days the Security Council would not be able to discuss the war and by the time it pressed for a cease-fire, Pakistan would have gained her objective. But Pakistan's planning failed. Between dusk and dawn of 3-4 December 1971, Pakistan mounted 24 air attacks including three on India's bomber base at Agra. Pakistan's biggest failure was in not being able to deter India's striking capability. Though Pakistan had some of the finest aircraft, received as gifts, the Indian Air Force possessed enough punch if applied in a calculated and judicious manner. Within hours Indian Canberras struck at Murid, Mianwali, Sargodha, Chandar, Risalwala, Shorkot and Mashrur airfields.

The Prime Minister was posted on the developments by the GOC-in-C, Eastern Command, General Jagjit Singh Aurora, who had got a call from General Manekshaw, the Indian Chief of Army Staff. The Prime Minister returned to Delhi from Calcutta at 10.30 P.M. and at 1 A.M. on December 4, Mrs Gandhi spoke to the nation and got a State of Emergency declared to repel the aggression decisively. She said: "Today the war in Bangladesh has become a war on India. This has imposed upon me, my government and the people of India a great responsibility. We have no other option but to put our country on war footing. Our brave officers and jawans are at their posts, mobilised for the defence of the country."

The speech was cool, composed and matter-of-fact. The people of India got courage from it; so did the armed forces at their posts.

When it became apparent that India might have to fight a defensive war in which the initiative lay with Pakistan, new contingency planning had to be evolved; supplies, fuel, food, bridge building materials and a thousand odds and ends had to be estimated, stored and stockpiled. The army commanders were clear in their minds that even if it were a retaliatory action the war should be fought on Pakistani soil and not in India. Before D-day, December 3, when Pakistan attacked, Yahya Khan in a radio broadcast had said that within ten days he would be fighting the Indians at the front. A stupid and vain boast for the President of a country; besides, in modern warfare, the Commander-in-Chief of an army did not parade

himself on the front line. India also had to assure a continuous flow of supplies for the jawans. This put tremendous strain on the railways, shipping, air and road transport. All departments of the Central and State Governments had to be coordinated. The railways were called upon to meet the demand and special types of wagons had to be provided for troop movements and the movement of supplies and equipment. Above all, the movements had to be done at night to avoid the enemy getting correct information.

Similarly the Post and Telegraph Department, and telephone and the civil communication in general had to be on almost continuous duty. Special cells had to be created for the collation of materials collected through the *Mukti Bahini* sources, our own military and civil intelligence machinery had to be reshaped. The BSF was of great value in collecting information about enemy formations, concentrations and movements. A special cell was created at the External Affairs Ministry to analyse the information available from East Pakistan and weigh the information gathered about Big Power attitudes towards the confrontation in the Indian subcontinent. Indian Ambassadors abroad were under tremendous pressure to put across India's point of view and keep friendly governments informed about the developments at home, and feed back the developments abroad. With this had to be geared the information media—basically radio and newspapers.

The sector commanders often met newspapermen in their positions to appraise them of the developing situations in confidence to channelise the information media.

Another important factor was defence expenditure. When it was clear that India might have to go to war with Pakistan, certain imbalances in defence planning had to be made good, deficiencies regarding weapons and aircraft had to be removed and new weapons acquired. The early warning system to avoid sudden air strikes had to be updated and the entire radar network had to be re-aligned according to the sector plan and threat. Naturally there was an increase in defence expenditure. The revised estimates stood at Rs 1,410.76 crores; an excess over the budgeted outlay of about Rs 169.31 crores. In 1970 India's expenditure on Defence was computed at 3.4 per cent of the

Gross National Product.

This expenditure is not excessive when viewed against the defence priority and past experiences. If India had to fight, she might have to fight on three borders; in the North, facing China; and in the West and East against Pakistan. Though the context has changed now after the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent friendly country, the contingency Defence Plan in 1970 did not envisage the changes. Of 56 countries for which data on defence expenditure is available, 31 spend more than 3.4 per cent; of the 20 countries which spent less than 3.4 percent in 1970, 13 had mutual Security Pacts with the Big Powers. And none of these countries had to face aggression five times in 25 years.

Before we discuss the actual war in the Eastern front let us look at the strength of the Pakistan Army, Navy and Air Force in Bangladesh. The Pakistan armed forces were made of 35 infantry battalions; 4,000 Frontier Force troops; 25,000 East Pakistan Civil Armed Forces; 35,000 Razakars and 5,000 West Pakistani Police. In addition there was one regiment of armour plus two squadrons of American Chaffee tanks and six artillery regiments. The air force consisted of 20 Sabrejets of which seven were left slightly damaged or intact at Tejgaon war. The navy consisted of gunboats only.

Pakistan Army officers, it was evident that they had wanted to hold the strongpoints for about 30 days each and Dacca for 45 days; in all, the battle plan was to keep the Indian Army locked in a "pushing battle" for a month and a half so that international intervention would restore the *status quo ante*.

But Indian planning took into account the possible contingency plans of Pakistani commanders. The political aims laid before the Indian Chiefs of Staff were: liberation of Bangladesh as quickly as possible (according to General Jagjit Singh Aurora the Indian Army planned to liberate Bangladesh within three weeks; they did it in 13 days). To hold on in the West and in the North, if China came to Pakistan's help. And to gain enough territory in the West to bargain for any territory lost in Kashmir.

India achieved all her objectives: she liberated Bangladesh within 13 days, occupied 479.96 square miles of territory across the 1948 cease-fire line in Kashmir, occupied 373.93 square miles in the Punjab and was holding after the cease-fire 4765.71 square miles in Kutch and Sind. Against this, Pakistan occupied only 52.57 square miles in the Chhamb sector, India's Achilles heel in the West; 68.70 square miles in the Punjab and 0.5 square miles in Ganganagar, Rajasthan.

India's plan was based on what Liddell Hart called the "indirect approach." India avoided the Pakistani strongpoints and the arterial roads. Indian commanders followed the policy of isolation and by-passing and hitting the enemy from the rear. The other plan which was also successful was to occupy Dacca. This dealt the enemy a mortal blow by denying him a major base and demoralising him, while the mopping up and skirmishes at the strongpoints had been left to the other troops like the BSF and the *Mukti Bahini*. This also prevented the Pakistani forces from falling back and fighting again. They were also handicapped by their concept of static defence, their alienation from the local population and a complete breakdown of morale. Yet, where they fought, the Pakistani soldiers were not inferior to the Indians and they had more firepower. By the "indirect approach" Dacca was occupied before the outlying areas were liberated. In fact, Khulna, Comilla, Maynamati Cantonment and Rangpur fell or rather surrendered after 36

to 48 hours of the main surrender in Dacca.

It is unthinkable that Niazi, who was trained in the hard British school of conventional warfare was a fool, as he appeared to be from his defence plan. Like the Indian Chiefs of Staff he was surely given a political objective and that was holding up as many Indian Army divisions as possible to prevent overrunning West Pakistan, because India's 825,000-man army would have easily crushed Pakistan's three lakh-army any time. Secondly, Niazi might have been told that help from either China or the USA would be forthcoming if he could hold on for 30 days. He knew that he would be licked under the given circumstances but how fast this would happen was beyond his reckoning. The ideal defence plan for Niazi would have been to draw the Indian Army inside Bangladesh and hold them in the *duab* of Padma and Jamuna. The Indian Army could then have been held up there for more than a month. But giving up territory would have been political suicide for Yahya Khan. Pakistani strategy released at least four divisions of the Indian Army for the Western front because India, freed from the necessity of locking her major punch in the *duab*, tried to put tremendous pressure in the West. In any case, Niazi as a General was in an unenviable position.

India counter-attacked the Pakistani forces in Bangladesh on December 3 night with only a 7:4 ratio whereas no commander would have liked to attack with forces in less than a 3:1 ratio. What tilted the scale was perhaps the massive logistic support by the *Mukti Bahini* and the East Bengal Regiment. It is very difficult to evaluate the actual role of the *Mukti Bahini*; their actual number cannot be accurately estimated. In the logistic support the *Mukti Bahini* was successful but in the real war game they had to be relegated to the secondary role though the vital information they brought from inside Bangladesh had often changed the outcome of many small battles in the Eastern sector. The 7:4 ratio is a tenuous superiority and in General Aurora's observation after the surrender, "I never knew they had 93,000 troops" clarifies the situation further. The total number of Indian forces for Bangladesh's liberation was a little over 300,000 including the *Mukti Bahini* and the deployment spread over West Bengal, Assam, Tripura

and Meghalaya. India had to keep forces near the Chinese border as well which accounted for another 100,000 bringing the total number of battle-ready men in the Eastern sector to about half a million.

There are some discrepancies in the estimates of the total strength of the *Mukti Bahini*. India has an inventory of the total number of men trained in the liberated areas and other places by the Indian Army for which the army was praised publicly by the Bangladesh Premier, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in Dacca. But the others who had taken to arms were difficult to log. According to an interview given by Pakistan's Ambassador in Washington on 15 August 1971 to the American Broadcasting Corporation, there were "at least about 160,000 armed men who defected on account of Awami League propaganda and the army was asked on March 25 to go and deal with these 160,000 armed men."

To another question by the interviewer, the Ambassador said: "These weapons came from looting of armouries and government stores and from the armouries of the Reserve Police and so on, weapons that had been collected by force, by militant student bands who were going on knocking at the doors of the houses and asking people to deliver their guns or whatever sporting rifles—guns and rifles—they had. These were not collected from the East Pakistan Rifles. We wish we had taken the trouble to disarm them before...."

But not all these armed men collaborated with the Indian Army when operations began after 3 December 1971. Among those who had weapons from inside Pakistan, there were the pro-Peking leftists, the volunteers of the NAP, the pro-Moscow Communist Party of Pakistan and volunteers of the Awami League. Many of these groups remained inside Bangladesh and, like the students, operated from within. Though the overall impact of their sabotage and hit-and-run operations helped the Indian Army, proper liaison was absent in many cases. In spite of their almost independent operations, they provided logistic support to the Indian Army when the fighting broke out.

Before we discuss the strategy or tactical planning by either side in detail let us look at the Indian formations and those



of General Niazi's in the Bangladesh operation.

India organised three corps for Bangladesh operations: 2 corps with HQ at Krishnagar were commanded by Lieutenant-General T.N. Raina. The total force under command was two infantry and mountain divisions, and one paratroop brigade less a battalion supported by a medium regiment with Russian T-55 medium tanks, and one light tank regiment with Russian-built PT-76 amphibian tanks and artillery and other supporting arms which were part of the divisions.

33 Corps HQ Siliguri was commanded by Lieutenant-General M.N. Thapan. The total four under command: One Mountain division and two extra brigades—one infantry brigade and one Mountain Battalion. The brigade with one Indian battalion which attacked Mymensingh and later joined the brigade coming from Jamalpur.

Since General Thapan's was the head of the sledge-hammer, he had one light armour regiment with PT-76 Russian tanks. One medium artillery regiment with British made 5.5 inch guns and engineering units for building bridges.

101 Communication Zone was located in this region with headquarters at Gauhati. The force consisted of one infantry brigade under Major-General G.S. Gill after he was wounded.

4 Corps had headquarters at Agartala and was commanded by Lieutenant-General Sagat Singh.

Total forces consisted of three Mountain Divisions. Among the extra forces allotted were two *ad hoc* squadrons of light armour—Russian PT-76 tanks and one medium 5.5 inch artillery regiment.

The appointment of air force liaison officers at all levels made it possible for the commanders to call for close air support to ground troops apart from scheduled sorties. The close air support to the troops in the Eastern theatre increased gradually as the Pakistan Air Force was forced out of the sky.

Compared to the Indian deployment and formations Pakistani formations in Bangladesh when the war broke out were like this:

<i>Formation</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Name of Commander</i>
1. Headquarters Eastern Command	Dacca	Lieutenant-General A.A.K. Niazi

HQ 36 Infantry Division	Dacca	Major-General Mohammad Jamshed Khan
HQ 93 Independent Brigade	Dacca	Brigadier Qadir Khan

In addition to these they had 33 Punjab and 31 Baluch Regiments to look after Mymensingh, Phulpur, Jamalpur, Rajendragunj, Hathibanda, Diwangung and Tengail. The 70 Wing Rangers and 71 Wing Rangers were guarding the Mymensingh-Kishoregunj area.

<i>Formation</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Name of Commander</i>
2. HQ 39 Infantry Division	Chandpur	Major-General Rahim Khan
3. HQ 53 Infantry Brigade	Feni	Brigadier Mohammad Aslam Niazi
15 Baluch	Feni	
39 Baluch	Laksham-Mian Bazar and Chaudagram	
23 Punjab	Mian Bazar-Parikat	
21 Azad Kashmir Battalion	Laksham-Feni Stretch	
HQ 117 Infantry Brigade	Comilla	Brigadier Sheikh Mansoor Hussain
Tank squadron (Chaffee)	Comilla	
30 Punjabi	Saldanadi-Bibir Bazar	
25 Frontier Force	Lalmati-Mynamati	
12 Azad Kashmir Battalion	Comilla	
HQ 91 Infantry Brigade	Chittagong	Brigadier Mian Taskin-Uddin
24 Frontier Force	Ramgarh-Karehat Zarargunj-Chittagong	
HQ 97 Infantry Brigade	Chittagong	Brigadier Mohammad Khan Malik
48 Baluch	Chittagong	
2 CDO Battalion	Rangamati	
60, 61 Wing Ranger	Chittagong-Ramgarh and Karehat	
HQ 14 Infantry Division	Ashugunj	Major-General Kazi Abdul Mazid Khan
HQ 202 Infantry Brigade	Sylhet	Brigadier Asgar Hussain

21 Punjab	In charge of Chattak, Sylhet, Jaintiapur and Charkai	
91 Mujahid Battalion	Sunakgunj-Sheola	
Khyber Rifles	Sunamgunj-Sheola	
Thal Scout	do	
Tochi Scouts	do	
2 Company 12 Azad Kashmir Rifles	Sylhet	
HQ 313 Infantry Brigade	Maulvi Bazar	Brigadier Iftikar
22 Baluch	Kalaura-Juri Area	
30 Frontier Force	Shrimanga, Shamsheernagar and Kamalpur which saw bitter fighting	
2 Company of 91 Mujahid	Fenchugunj and Sherpur	
HQ 27 Infantry Brigade	Brahmanbaria	Brigadier Shadullah
33 Baluch	Kasba, Saidabad and Kutt area	
12 Frontier Force	Ganganagar, Paharpur and Akhaura	
HQ 16 Infantry Division	Natore	Major-General Nazir Hussain Shah
29 Cavalry less one squadron	Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, Ghoraghat and Hili. 29 Cavalry fought very well in the Hili battle	
HQ 23 Infantry Brigade	Saidpur	Brigadier Iqbal Mohammad Shafi
25 Punjab	Hatibandha, Lalmonirhat, Nageswari, Kurigram	
26 Frontier Force	Dinajpur Phulsari	
48 Punjab	Thakurgaon, Panchgarh	
8 Punjab	Lalmonirhat-Rangpur	
34 Punjab	Thakurgaon-Boda-Nilphamari	
86 Mujahid Battalion	Hathibanda-Ragupur-Hili-Gaibanda	
HQ 205 Infantry Brigade	Khetlal	Brigadier Tajmal Hussain Malik
32 Baluch	Ghoraghat-Gaburgunj	
4 Frontier Force	Hili	

3 Baluch	Jaipurhat, Jaipur, Muhabatpur	
HQ 34 Infantry Brigade	Natore	Brigadier Mir Abdul Naycem
32 Punjab	Nawabgunj-Pirgunj	
Cipnay of 12 Punjab	Ishwardi	
13 Frontier Force	Fenitala, Rasulbil Sapahar, Gundar Danga	
HQ 9 Infantry Division	Jessore	Major-General M.H. Ansari
3 Independent Armoured Squadron	Jessore	
HQ 57 Infantry Brigade	Jhenidah	
Squadron of 22 Cavalry	Kushtia-Bheramara	
18 Punjab	Meherpur-Chauddanga, Darshana	
50 Punjab	Jhenidah-Kotchandpur	
29 Baluch	Bheramara-Salimpur, Kaliskundi and Kushtia	
HQ 107 Infantry Brigade	Jessore	Brigadier Malik Hayat Khan
22 Frontier Force	Jhikargatcha-Benapore	
38 Frontier Force	Afra, Sajjali, Asannagar	
6 Punjab	Jessore	
21 Punjab	Satkhirra, Kalaora	
15 Frontier Force	Jessore	
12 Punjab	Jessore	
HQ East Pakistan Cavalry	Dacca	Major-General Mohammed Jamshed Khan
and Air Force		
6 Sections	covering Dacca-Jessore Rajshahi-Rangpur Comilla-Chittagong	

These were the adversaries against the three Indian corps commanded by General Raina, General Thapan and General Sagat Singh. Each went for innovations and was free to change his tactical planning, which was often done. When the Indian Army faced stiff opposition near Ashugunj, General Sagat Singh went up in a helicopter and flew over the enemy territory to find an alternative route. He used only a part of his troops to pin down

a Pakistan Brigade and made a bridgehead with the bulk of his troops and crossed the Madhumati. General Raina of 2 Corps was another taciturn, hard-hitting General, with an eye patch over one of his eyes like General Dayan and General Chu-te of Mao Tse-tung's guerrilla army. The Indian mobilisation near Nadia, convinced Pakistan that India was really planning for a limited action to occupy territory in West Bangladesh to settle the refugees. While General Raina's was the base of the "key," the two "teeth" were General Sagat Singh and General Thapan; the sledgehammer strike from the West and the slicing from the East and North defeated the Pakistan Army in Bangladesh.

There was a lot of criticism against General Niazi in the Indian and foreign Press, but he was never underestimated by his Indian adversaries. What ruined Niazi was the "overall national policy of Pakistan to sacrifice the men and the territory of Bangladesh to save West Pakistan." General Niazi was not a politician-General like Yahya Khan or Ayub Khan. If he had belonged to the cabal he could have got better political appointments as Minister, rather than be obliged to fight on the Eastern front.

Many people have criticised his method of deployment. His forces were deployed according to their appreciation of Indian deployment and what they thought was the political aim of the Indian Army in Bangladesh. The Indian Army was deployed only two months before the war. Until October, the Border Security Force was in charge of the border outposts. When the Indian Army was deployed in October, BSF came under the command of the army and they did their part of the job. A total of 22 battalions of the BSF were utilised by the army to clean up areas by-passed and for the first time the BSF fought the regular Pakistani Army with howitzers and artillery. Pakistan thought that India was ready for limited action not an all out offensive. General Jagjit Singh Aurora remarked: "The moment we came to know that they were all soft inside, we decided to by-pass and isolate them in their penny packets." In fact the tactics of by-passing and encirclement scared them so that Jessore, the Divisional Headquarters fell without a fight. Except the Mynamati Cantonment in Comilla, there was no prolonged fighting anywhere. Even Dacca fell without a shot being fired.

The Pakistan Army Headquarters in West Pakistan were under

the impression that India would occupy territory in East Pakistan near Nadia, Dinajpur, Rajshahi and Jessore and install a puppet Bangladesh Government to settle the refugees along the border. So, the entire Pakistan Army was geared for a holding action and failed to utilise the natural defences to its advantage. Though Generals need not be politicians, they should keep in their minds the ultimate political objective and devise contingency plans according to it. The major drawback for the Pakistan Army, in spite of Niazi being a good General, was a failure to draw a contingency plan because the initiative was not left with him. He was told that he should be able to hold the Indian Army at the border for at least a month; by that time Pakistan, with her friends, would be able to internationalise the issue, bring the United Nations observers and also possibly get help from the United States or China. On the basis of these assurances and assuming that Indian mobilisation was for a limited operation, "rigid" defence plans were drawn, mobility and flexibility were sacrificed for static defence. The army remained road-bound and the inside was "all soft." So, when India hit at the soft underbelly in retaliation, they found the entire Pakistan Army reeling from the blow and with no room to manoeuvre.

Talking about the Bangladesh operation. The GOC-in-C, Eastern Command said: "Now, you see, we had a little superiority of the armour that you can't rule out, but you should also know that we were given a specific task. For Pakistan the task was also a limited one; to hold on to their defences till help came from outside." The arms supplied to Pakistan by her allies, the United States and China allowed her to fight India for only two months. In the Eastern front, the army was given only 45 days' ammunition and reserve. They army wanted to fight for 30 days at the border and 45 days in Dacca. They had no alternative plan to fall back upon once a position was lost. The concept of mobile defence was entirely ignored. As a result, General Niazi could not use the terrain in his own favour. Both General Jacob and General Aurora had to admit in briefings that had the Pakistanis decided to hold the river lines the Indian Army would have had trouble. General Aurora said on 16 December 1971 at a briefing: "Abdullah [Niazi] could have held me there for a month, maybe even more; had he deployed his forces along the Jamuna and

Meghna." Why Abdullah did not do so we have already discussed.

How the static defence strategy of the Pakistan Army brought about its defeat was perhaps best illustrated at Bhairab Bazar crossing. The 14 Division Headquarter was in Ashgunj. On their way to Bhairab, Indian troops faced stiff resistance where they had to fight against a brigade. But the Indian Army commander took bold action; he left behind only one battalion to pin down the Pakistani brigade and went forward to make a bridgehead for the river crossing. His flank was open and a bold counter-attack with less than a battalion would have jeopardised the move. But the counter-attack on the flank never came. The other reason was bad intelligence. While talking to the foreign Press, both Farman Ali and Niazi used to exaggerate the number of Indian forces deployed at the Indo-Pakistan border and they soon started to give credence to their own lies. Though India had the full support of the Bangladesh partisans, the East Bengal Regiment and the local population—which went a long way to provide the logistic and tactical support—attacking with a 7:4 ratio was really a bold step.

The main reason why the Indian Army could capture such huge amounts of ammunition was that the Pakistani forces could not use their guns properly. Before they had a chance, they were outmanoeuvred, either from behind or from the flanks. Otherwise their firepower was greater. And there was hardly any occasion when they had to use their reserves. In almost all areas, India captured about a month's ammunition reserve.

According to the latest available statistics Pakistan lost in Bangladesh 72 tanks, 34 anti-aircraft guns (37 mm); 51 recoilless guns (106 mm)—the deadliest of all defensive weapons; five .30 anti-aircraft guns (145 mm); 43 (145 mm) pack howitzers; 44 mortars; eleven 3.7 inch howitzers; and one 37 mm super long range gun.

Pakistan's loss in men before and during the war was substantial in Bangladesh: 5,400 officers and men were killed in action against the *Mukti Bahini* and 4,675 officers and men were wounded. And between December 3 and December 16, an estimated 3,000 officers and men were killed and 4,300 wounded. From these figures it is evident that Pakistan had lost more men in ambushes and

*Mukti Bahini* attacks during the eight months before the war than during it.

The Indian loss was not inconsiderable. India lost 1,476 officers and men and 4,201 were wounded. The number of missing was 39. The number of casualties in the BSF was 130 dead and 350 wounded.

To a great extent, the defeat of Pakistani forces was because of a lack of air support. After the Sabrejets were knocked down near Boyra by Indian Gnats, Pakistani pilots became battle shy and by December 5, the Indian Air Force had a free run of the Eastern sky. On the very night Pakistan attacked, Indian Air Force Canberras bombed Tejgaon and Kurmitola airports. The Indian Air Force is shy to discuss the technique it adopted to destroy the runways on the first strike to prevent the fighters and bombers from taking off. Pakistan Air Force in Bangladesh was off the air because runways were in a shambles and fuel was insufficient. The task given to the IAF was to isolate the garrisons, destroy the Pakistan Air Force and disrupt the supply lines totally. In one day, the IAF flew 200 sorties, mostly on destruction missions to paralyse the transport and communication systems and provide close support to Indian troops. The Indian Air Force was to make the best use of its resources. The Gnats were again cleverly exploited, the India-made Mig-21s and the HF-24s wrought havoc on the enemy airfields and in air encounters. The SU-7 proved its usefulness and the Sea Hawks from the carrier immobilised Pakistani ports and shot up river craft to prevent the retreat of and supply to the Pakistan Army. Technically, Pakistan Air Force, though smaller in numbers is superior to the Indian Air Force. But the Pakistani pilots were not up to the mark.

The other factor was the striking back by the IAF in the shortest possible time. Pakistan bombed India at 5.47 P.M. and the IAF struck back at 11 P.M., within five and half hours of the first air strike by Pakistan. Considering the fact that the planes were dispersed in far away airfields and it takes about four hours to "bomb up" a Canberra, the Indian feat deserved praise. Besides, most of the Indian bombings on the night of December 3 and 4 were long range strategic bombings, destroying enemy's fuel, stores, runways, port facilities and even parked aircraft



on the runways. Not a single Indian aircraft was damaged on the ground; a caution India learnt in the 1965 war.

India's use of the air arm was the subject of controversy both in 1962 during the China war as well as in 1965. When the Chinese attacked, the air force was not used even in our own territory in combat and support roles, because we were afraid of the massive Chinese Air Force. But, neither our intelligence nor the air force knew that China did not have long range aircraft to bomb Indian territory and return to their bases in Tibet. The Indian habitations in Tawang, Bomdila, and other areas were at least 300 miles as the crow flies from the Chinese air bases in Tibet, which would have meant a 600-mile trip leaving only a couple of minutes to bomb enemy territory.

Moreover, no aircraft can take off from 12,000 to 14,000 feet with a full reserve of fuel in the rarefied atmosphere. Most of the Chinese fighters or bombers, if they chose to bomb India, would have to take off with half-full or quarter-full tanks, a condition which no air force commander would permit. But we did not know that. Similarly in the 1965 war, as during the Kutch offensive by Pakistan we utilised our air force half-heartedly. While in 1962 and during the Kutch war, the air force was used only for supplies, 1965 saw a little improvement. In 1971, however, the army chief saw to it that the air force took part in combat duty and performed its tactical role apart from the strategic role it was supposed to play.

One disadvantage, however, was the qualitatively better fighters and bombers that Pakistan had. Before the 1971 war, Pakistan had 265 front line aircraft which included US-made F-104A Starfighters, Russian-built MIG-19s supplied by China, the French Mirage 3Es, which were fitted with infra-red sensor equipment to allow night bombing and night fighting. Though the MIG-19s were inferior to the IAF's MIG-21s, the Mirage 3E was a formidable aircraft and more efficient in low level combat than the US-made F-104A Starfighter or the Sabrejet. But Pakistan failed to exploit her advantage over India so far as the PAF was concerned and the pre-emptive air strike was just a damp squib. Pakistan Air Force also failed to utilise the long range capacity of the Mirage 3E. Though the Mirage could have bombed as far as New Delhi and Lucknow, it was never used beyond the front line

airfields of India. On the other hand, the IAF's counter-strike which started from 11 P.M. on December 3 was much more effective. Before the first light of dawn, which in Delhi and in West Pakistan in winter touches the ground targets at about 7 A.M. most of the IAF bombers and fighter-bombers were back at their bases to take off again for tactical support on strategic bombing. After the first night's battering given to Pakistan, Indian bombers were sent on solo missions and were very effective. Both in the East and in the West, targets of strategic military importance were destroyed.

It is yet too early to know what prevented Pakistan from using the PAF to the full capacity after the Indian air attacks. Reasonable surmise is that the attacks by Indian planes broke the back of the PAF within the first 24 hours of the war and there was hardly any serious attempt by the PAF to challenge the Indian superiority established in the sky. They were so thoroughly disorganised that even the Indian Navy's Task Force, while destroying Karachi, was not attacked by the PAF. During the 1971 war the Indian Air Force flew about 500 sorties a day which meant one-third of its capacity. The basic difference between the 1965 war and the one fought in 1971 was that the first one was land-locked and the air force was used only in a support role. But in 1971 it was a full-scale war with all three arms of the services utilised to their full capacity. The navy did its job well and functioned remarkably in a support role.

Commenting on the role of the Indian Navy, Major-General D.K. Palit in his book *The Lightning Campaign* wrote:

The fact is that the deployment of the Naval Arm to its full potential has international implications. Unlike the Army and the Air Force which operate on or over home territory of the immediate belligerents, the Navy, at full steam go, so to say, must break out of territorial waters and operate on the open seas. This is a form of escalation in which the super powers may indulge—as indeed, they frequently do. It is not a game that smaller powers can play without inviting complications. Until 1971 India had not taken recourse to this step.

The Indian Navy is the weakest arm of the Indian defence

apparatus. But the task given to it during the war was formidable. It had to be responsible for protecting Indian shipping lines. It had to bring ships on the high seas to home ports, guard port installations, capture or destroy Pakistani vessels, stop all Pakistani shipping from the West to the Eastern ports and prevent war supplies to Pakistan from abroad; it also had to undertake sabotage and clandestine attacks on Pakistani ports, destroy the Pakistan Navy and throw a blockade around Chittagong and the port of Karachi.

Before 1971, India had increased her naval strength and split the commands into the Western Naval Command under Flag Officer Commanding in Chief Western Naval Command (under a Vice-Admiral) in Bombay, and the Eastern Naval Command under Flag Officer Commanding in Chief, Eastern Naval Command (under a Vice-Admiral) with his base at Vishakhapatnam. Bangladesh and the Eastern seaboard of India including the Andamans and Nicobar islands fall under the Eastern Naval Command. A third naval area—Southern Naval Area under a naval Flag Officer was created with its base at Cochin.

Even before the outbreak of hostility, India moved her Eastern Naval Command to the Andamans and all efforts were made to avoid ships being sunk in the port areas. Similar actions were also taken in the Western Command and Southern Naval Area. That this was the most prudent step was proved when the *PNS Ghazi* was sunk at the mouth of Vishakhapatnam port. *Ghazi* was sent to destroy Indian shipping within the port. Another Pakistani submarine was damaged seriously. India apprehended that Pakistan's Midget and Chariot submarines would be of particular danger to the Indian Navy and shipping. The Midget submarines are small and can be operated with a crew of only ten men, whereas the Chariot is like a human controlled torpedo which can be launched near the targets. But Pakistani Midgets had the capacity to hit Indian ships within Bombay harbour from Karachi.

The Indian Navy performed the task allotted to it extremely well. During the 14 days of war the Indian Navy escorted 130 ships to home ports. At one time during the war there were more than 40 ships on the high seas and their safety was in the hands of the Indian Navy. The responsibility of allowing neutral ships

to leave the enemy harbour was also entrusted to the Indian Navy. While in the Eastern sector the task of the Indian Navy was less arduous, its task on the Western coast was formidable. Karachi was a well-defended port; apart from shore batteries and harbour defence systems, several squadrons of fighters and bombers were within easy call. Pakistan had seven powerful and modernised destroyers, a 6,000 ton light cruiser, a number of supporting ships and at least two big submarines. In a daring attack the Indian Navy entered Karachi port at midnight on 4 December. The moment Indian radar picked up moving objects on the sea and was sure they were Pakistani naval vessels, they opened up with all they had and destroyed the destroyers, *Khaiber* and *Shahjehan*, sank two minesweepers, and severely damaged three other ships. India lost her frigate *Kukri* to a torpedo attack from an enemy submarine which could not be identified. In the Eastern sector *INS Vikrant* steamed North on December 4 and completed the bombing of Cox's Bazar with the help of the Sea Hawks based on her deck. India also used merchant ships for landing troops near Cox's Bazar. In the Eastern sector the blockade was complete and no supply ships could either enter or leave Pakistani ports in the East.

In the naval operations in East Pakistan, almost all Pakistani airfields located in the South were pounded by Sea Hawks based on *Vikrant*. These aircraft also destroyed the internal shipping and riverine transports and disabled the ports of Chalna, Mangla, Chittagong and others. In this operation, Pakistan lost 12 gunboats and a dozen other vessels. Two Pakistani merchant ships of a total tonnage of 16,500 were captured with cargo. The Southern Command Area of the Indian Navy searched at least 143 foreign ships to make sure they did not carry contrabands for Pakistan.

On December 10, the Indian Navy struck again at Karachi port destroying fuel dumps and after splitting its force pounded the Markan coast North of Karachi, destroying shore installations and the port of Gwadar. It is in this second raid that India lost the anti-submarine frigate *Kukri* which was covering from behind the withdrawal of the Task Force. Wild Press reports about *Kukri* being sunk by an American submarine were published in India which drew prompt denial from the American Embassy

which sketched the route and position of the American nuclear submarine at the time of the sinking of *Kukri*. *Kukri* might have been sunk by a torpedo released from one of the Midgets or one from the damaged Pakistani submarine and it is a known fact that a well aimed torpedo at a certain vulnerable spot of a ship is enough to sink it. So, in the first major naval action since its birth, the Indian Navy came out with flying colours.

When the two arms of defence were so effective there was no reason why the land forces should not be able to achieve their goals. The Pakistan Army was being harassed from the air, their communication and supply lines had been cut off, and over 100,000 men in arms, organised or disorganised, were nibbling at their backs. At midnight on December 3, when the orders for a general offensive were issued, India already had lodgements in several areas which were earlier occupied by the *Mukti Bahini* and they also had clear information of the enemy positions, their strongholds, their strength and their possible intentions. All along the border "retaliatory actions" had been taken by the Indian Army earlier when the Prime Minister declared publicly that the Indian Army would enter the territory of East Pakistan in "self-defence."

Though the open clash of armour near Chaugatcha looked like a formal beginning of the war of 1971, it is easy to explain that the seed of the 1971 war was sown the day Pakistan signed the Tashkent Agreement. It was an agreement imposed on both India and Pakistan when neither side could claim a clear victory. Though India gained more, Pakistani propaganda was so effective that people, not only in Pakistan but elsewhere also, believed that the war had been started by India and that Pakistan had come out in a better shape after the 21-day war. The fact was just the opposite. No doubt, Pakistan had some advantage at the bargaining table because of its occupation of a large chunk of territory in the Chhamb sector, Pakistan's gain in other sectors was nil and it was not in a position to continue the war further as the ammunition supplied by the United States and other countries would not have lasted more than a month; for India the time limit was three months. The notion that India started the war has been cleared by the former Prime Minister of Britain, Harold Wilson, in his memoirs and he went further to say that

he had been informed wrongly by his Foreign Office, an admission which needed a lot of courage and which proved how Pakistan's friends were dominating even the Foreign Office of Britain.

After the defeat in 1965, which really was a full-scale war between land forces, Pakistan tried to perfect her fighting machine by improving the standards of the army, navy and air force. It received help from foreign experts and reorganised training. Secret circulars issued by the Pakistan Army Headquarters spelt out in the minutest detail the deployment, offensive and defensive operations against India in case of a war in the mountains (Kashmir), in the deserts (Rajasthan) and in the riverine Bangladesh.

Clear instructions were issued to senior army officers for training the jawans in guerrilla tactics, counter-guerrilla and counter-insurgency measures. Pakistan knew that it would fight a war and in that war—it were sure, unlike in 1965—the East wing would also be involved. This was confirmed by two booklets I was able to pick up near Jessore cantonment. These manuals supplied to senior Pakistan Army officers explained in detail the strategy and training for the Pakistan Army. With code number *GSP 1359 Operations of War (Volume 2), Offensive Operations, 1967*, and the other with code number *GSP 1355 Operations of War (Volume 1), Defence 1966*. These booklets gave out Pakistan's defence and offensive plans with diagrams and pictures, (see photostats). Their failure lies mostly with their inability to put those plans into action for various reasons.

One of the reasons perhaps was that the Indian Army, Navy and the Air Force underwent vast changes within the last half decade and their baptism by fire in 1962 and 1965 gave them maturity; above all they had a dynamic leadership. In any war, whatever be the weapons or however sophisticated, the decisive factor is the men behind the weapons and firm and dynamic leadership by politicians. Where the wedding of the two systems is perfect, the men can fight like demons. India had a cause and she fought for it. These last two factors were not included in the Pakistani manual because they never thought that India might mean business, at least once.

The foreword of the booklet on offence reads:

A revised publication on 'Defence' based on our study of lessons learnt from the Indo-Pakistan War—September 1965 has already been issued to the Army. The concept of offensive operations as dealt with in this pamphlet embodies all modifications that are considered necessary as a result of the war experience. This will, in future, form the basis for study and training in offensive operations at all levels.

The relevant sections from the two booklets, left by the 9 Div. of the Pakistan Army at Jessore Cantonment when they evacuated in a hurry, are quoted here:

### **Code GSP 1359: OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS**

#### **Section 7—INFILTRATION**

##### **General**

1. It may not always be necessary to go through all the phases of an attack. Infiltration tactics may well be less expensive in casualties and, at times, possibly achieve the commander's aim.
2. Infiltration is a technique of movement used in conjunction with offensive operations. The attacking force moves by individuals or in small groups to a previously designated area in the enemy's rear. Once assembled, the force proceeds in the execution of its assigned mission; attack, harass, obtain intelligence etc. Infiltration can best be used when the enemy is deployed on a wide front with large gaps between his defended localities. It should be remembered that the despatch of infiltration groups may lead to gaps in dispositions inviting similar tactics to be employed by the enemy. Therefore troops for this task may preferably be found from the depth/non-committed units.

##### **Planning**

3. Suitable objectives for infiltration are as follows:
  - a. Areas of ground which restrict the movement of enemy reserves or isolate his defensive positions.
  - b. Fire support means.
  - c. Command and communication centres.
  - d. Logistic installations.

The objectives must contribute directly to the accomplishment of the mission and their value must be assessed against the inevitable dissipation of some of the strength of the force.

4. Infiltration may be a long drawn out operation. Planning must be detailed and troops carefully briefed. The movement by stealth between or through enemy positions and the assembly of infiltrating forces before decisive action will be slow.
5. Infiltration is helped by the use of terrain, e.g. woods, swamps and broken ground, which limits the enemy's observation and surveillance of the routes to be used. Conditions of reduced visibility such as darkness, fog, falling snow or smoke will also assist the undetected movement of infiltrating forces though such conditions should cause an alert enemy to increase his surveillance. Infiltration against an alert enemy, equipped with means of detecting movement, require the careful use of deception and diversionary measures and of electronic counter measures. Widespread enemy use of illumination makes infiltration more difficult.
6. Infiltration is difficult to coordinate and control, especially if a change of plan becomes necessary after the operation has been launched. The movement of infiltrating groups must be coordinated with the fire plan and prior arrangements made for link-up with other attacking forces or for withdrawal.

#### **Conduct**

7. Infiltrating elements in small groups, pass through, over or round enemy forward defended localities avoiding detection when possible and, if detected, avoiding decisive action. They move normally through multiple lanes to assembly positions in the area of objectives. The movement of the groups through the enemy defensive area to their attack positions may be accompanied by demonstrations, including fire support, in areas not included in the infiltration. Neutralizing fire may also be directed, before the advance, in the area of infiltration to reduce enemy surveillance capability but it must be weighed up against the loss of surprise.
8. Upon arrival in the assembly area, infiltrating groups deploy and proceed to objectives at allotted times. According to their mission, they then consolidate in preparation for link-up or withdrawal.
9. A combination of a widely dispersed enemy, suitable terrain and of means of concealment may enable infiltrating units to use vehicles during the operation. APCs, where available, may offer



considerable scope for infiltration. Similarly infiltrating troops may use boats.

10. Infiltrating troops proceeding to great depths or remaining in the enemy's rear for extended periods, require supply which can sometimes only be provided by air. Maximum use should be made of captured enemy stocks but the success of the operation must not be jeopardized by sole reliance on the seizure of such stocks.

## **Section 11—OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS UNDER SPECIAL CONDITIONS**

### **General**

1. This section deals with the offensive operations under special conditions, i.e., in mountains, jungles, built-up/fortified areas and riverine terrain. The fundamentals, discussed in Section 1, fully apply. However, there are points, peculiar to these conditions, which merit special consideration. The succeeding paragraphs deal with these.

### **Mountains**

2. Objectives are frequently the heights which dominate the passes and permit movement through the mountains. Each dominant height must be secured before movement to the next. While planning is centralized, execution is decentralized to semi-independent tactical groupings. Whenever possible, attacks should strike the enemy in the flank or rear.

3. Mountain areas favour infiltration. Surprise may be achieved by movement of small mountain-trained forces.

4. Time and space factors vary with the configuration of the terrain, altitude, scarcity of roads, and season. Movement is measured in time rather than distance. Orders are issued early because of the longer time required and increased difficulty to move units and supplies.

5. Tanks in substantial number are usually of limited value in mountain terrain, but their use must be exploited where possible. The use of heavy infantry weapons and artillery is hampered by their bulk and weight, considerable dead space in their fields of fire, and difficulty of observation. However, high angle fire weapons assume major importance in support of units operating on heights. The importance of close combat increases as the value of other methods of combat decreases.

6. In mountain operations, the use of radio and the radio relay, is restricted because of the terrain. The siting of radio equipment, therefore, is important. Installation of an extensive wire system is difficult. Liaison personnel are slowed by limited nets.

7. Only minor modifications are required in the organization of formations for fighting in the mountains. Increased emphasis is placed upon supply and movement and the elimination of vehicles and weapons not suited to the terrain. In some areas animal transport may be available from local sources.

### **Jungle**

8. Jungle areas are conducive to raids and infiltration. Combat in jungles is conducted at extremely close quarters by relatively small bodies of troops.

9. Vegetation and lack of observation increase the need for security which often can be obtained only through the use of security detachments. Due to the greatly increased importance of routes through otherwise largely impassable terrain, roads, trails, and rivers are frequently considered key terrain.

10. In jungles the effects of terrain on communications are similar to those encountered in mountain operations. Field expedients to elevate radio antennas above vegetation should be employed. Maintenance of electronic equipment in jungle operations must be emphasised by commanders.

11. Administrative problems are increased in jungle operations. Supply and evacuation by air are of great value but are difficult and often not feasible. Maintenance of equipment is difficult. Sanitation and health measures are important and must be rigidly enforced. Engineer requirements are increased.

12. Proper training and conditioning of troops to jungle living, together with suitable equipment and initiative of individual and small unit leaders, are essential. Control of units and observation are difficult.

### **Riverine Terrain**

14. As in advance by land route, a force advancing along a waterway should have an advance guard. To be effective it should normally include the following:

- a. An engineer detachment for clearing obstacles and marking the navigation channel. The detachment must have an infantry escort with normal supporting such as mortars

and machine guns. Forward Officers should be included.

- b. A composite force of infantry and supporting arms for clearing enemy opposition and carrying out outflanking moves.

15. The advance guard should preferably be carried in small power-driven craft. The main body can be carried in larger craft like river steamers. Some smaller craft should, however, be included in the main body to facilitate the carrying out of outflanking moves if necessary. Fighting from the craft must be avoided. Troops should be able to beach immediately being fired at effectively. It may be necessary to spray the landing area with small arms fire before beaching to deter any lurking snipers. Beaching or movement can be screened by smoke. Artillery should fire from the ground and not from the craft.

16. Harbour areas should be protected both by day and night. When the force is halted on the banks for the night small reconnaissance parties in high-powered craft can be sent out for reconnaissance of the waterway and of any side channels that may exist.

17. It may sometimes become necessary to provide flankguards during an advance. These will move along the river banks. They must have their own power-driven water transport so that where parallel waterways exist they can move along these.

18. Command, while afloat, is a problem. The commander must have a craft of superior speed to the others in his command. On the battalion level an assault boat fitted with a 9.8 HP out-board motor has been used with a fair degree of success.

19. The need for efficient traffic control is as great for moves by a waterway as for moves by land routes. Provost can be employed for making routes, blocking side streams, providing water check points and supervising tying-up areas. To do so they will require small fast craft.

## **Code GSP 1357: OPERATIONS OF WAR DEFENCE**

1966

### **Section 4—DEFENCE UNDER SPECIAL CONDITIONS Defence in Jungle Terrain**

1. Characteristics: The vegetation, swamps, streams and rivers

though not impassable, hinder easy and quick movements. Concealment is easy and troops can move without being discovered; however, observation both by ground and air presents a serious problem. Defiles, trails, roads and built-up areas are the key points in a defensive system. High ground, because of limited observation it affords, is often not a great help. Field of fire has to be cleared for direct weapons and tops cleared for high trajectory weapons. While doing so security aspect has to be borne in mind. Non-existence of roads and narrowness of trails restricts movement of heavy transport/weapons in the initial stages. The land communication system has to be developed to ensure continuous logistics support. To operate in jungle a high standard of physical firmness is necessary. Because of humidity, rain etc. special care has to be taken of weapons and equipment. Command and control under circumstances, faces serious problems and has to be ensured.

2. Organisation of Defence: The fundamentals equally apply to defence in jungle terrain. However, the following assume extra importance:

- a. Enemy can approach the position without being detected. Infiltration becomes easier. Thus attack is possible from any direction. The proper utilisation of protective detachments, early warning system and effectiveness of OPs and patrols will minimise the danger of being surprised. While ensuring all-round defence, where possible, one or both flanks should rest on a natural obstacle like stream, river, lagoon, swamp, cliff etc.
- b. Limited observation restricts the fields of fire. Thus to have effective mutual support the frontages have to be shrunk considerably.
- c. To ensure that enemy can not get round easily the defence must have sufficient depth.

### **Defence in Mountainous Terrain**

3. The mountainous terrain favours the defender and comparatively small forces can successfully hold off against stronger enemy by occupying key terrain features. Since any large-scale movement is difficult and the enemy can only move along well defined valleys/approaches, these can be effectively blocked by the defender. The difficult terrain to some extent can neutralize

the enemy's superiority in armour and other supporting weapons. However, the defence plan must make maximum possible use of available fire support, particularly that of high trajectory weapons. Air reconnaissance and offensive air support operations will greatly assist in the successful conduct of defence battle.

4. The basic requirements for defence remain unchanged. The defence must be organised in depth and sufficient troops must be deployed for the protection of flanks and rear which are very vulnerable in this kind of terrain. The pattern of defence and organisation of Protective Detachments will necessarily be modified to suit the terrain conditions. However, the frontages would be comparatively narrow. While siting positions/weapons maximum use should be made of the reverse slopes and particular care taken to prevent plunging fire from automatic weapons. Considering the type of terrain and time and space factor, it would be desirable in some cases to decentralize command and keep reserves as forward as possible. Difficult terrain and extreme weather conditions would demand a high standard of physical fitness and introduction of special items of equipment and clothing will be necessary. When road communications are blocked/non-existent, maximum use will be made of animal transport and local resources. Air supply may be essential for the isolated localities for limited periods.

#### **Defence in Riverine Warfare**

14. Waterways are the major communications in the low lying delta area of EAST PAKISTAN. It is possible to reach any part of the country by waterways from a few central points. No doubt slower than the other forms of transportation rivers can be depended upon throughout the year. Such communication centres therefore assume added importance.

15. The primary aim will be to cover important communication centres and to retain their control as bases for operations. Whereas the fundamentals will generally apply, the techniques will have to be suitably modified. Defence should be based on the river blocks with the Protective Detachments ahead.

16. The Protective Detachments will be mobile in fast craft and should have MMGs, mortars, anti-tank weapons and light naval fighting craft in support if available. While fighting back they will hold successive positions along the banks. The "River

Blocks" are somewhat equivalent to "Main Position". The sites selected should have as many of the following attributes as possible:

- a. The waterways should be narrow at the selected point.
- b. Should have natural navigational difficulties.
- c. Banks should dominate the waterways.
- d. Position should be difficult to outflank by both land and water.
- e. Should provide good cover and field of fire to the defenders.

Obstacle plan should include measures such as sinking of large barges/country boats, chains or steel wire below surface embedded logs and to some extent naval mines.

Troops operating in the region must be well-trained in watermanship and the improvisation and use of water expedients. Because of the moisture personal hygiene, care and maintenance of weapons and protection of ammunition and explosive should receive special attention.

Unfortunately, the Pakistan Army in East Pakistan did not follow the rules laid down in the booklets, neither did they try the improvisations mentioned in it. One of the reasons, perhaps, was the political objective set before them, i.e. not to give any territory to the enemy. So they remained in "Adam boxes" and failed to utilise fully the natural obstacles which in this case were the mighty rivers, the canals and the *beels*. The result was suicidal, in spite of meticulous manuals prepared by their High Command. Besides, the help from the *Mukti Bahini* was invaluable to the Indian Army in by-passing Pakistani positions; the sabotage and the infiltrations of *Mukti Bahini* also prevented the "riverine warfare" plan from being executed.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### They Fought in the East for the West

So the offensive was on December 3 at midnight. The tuned transistor radios jingled with music and then brought to the impatient officers and men of the Indian Army the clear message from the Prime Minister. They knew that the war in Bangladesh had become a war against India. Mrs Gandhi's broadcast that night was decisive, without any emotion, and was full of confidence shared by the officers and men of the army, navy and air force. Like a tiger crouched to spring, the Indian Army during the previous months had waited for this opportunity, and now they had got it. They too had a score to settle, being the victims of major aggression three times during the last 24 years. In the *Mukti Bahini* camps, a sigh of relief and a shout of joy were heard. I was sitting with some of the Bangla leaders; they were all jubilant, a jubilation surpassed only on December 16, when the entire Pakistan Army in the Eastern section surrendered. If they rejoiced on December 2, they cried on December 16 in joy.

The leap-frogging advance by the Indian Army from town to town, was unbelievable; the speed unmatched, even by the *blitzkrieg* against Poland. The only difference being that Pakistan, unlike Poland at the beginning of the Second World War, was prepared with modern weapons and it chose its own time of attack. For a better understanding of the progress of the war, we shall chronicle the progress achieved by each army crops separately:

*2 Corps:* General Raina's men fought the Boyra battle even before the formal declaration of war by Pakistan and were

engaged in the battles of Garibpur, Chaugatcha, Boyra and Maslia. When the order for a general offensive came, General Raina's men pushed forward. On the same night they captured Shahpur and Silinda; another column captured Darshana. The enemy suffered heavy casualties. The Marhattas who took the Pakistan shellings for some time struck with lightning speed and by the following evening had captured Sandih. Jibannagar was also free. The advance by the men of 2 Corps continued unchecked on December 5. On that day they called for air strikes to soften up the enemy in the surrounding areas of Jessore. The Pakistan Army battalion holed up at Jhenidah was strafed. A Pakistan Army column moving near Kalura was bombed and strafed.

The 2 Corps advanced towards Kaligunj capturing Kotchandpur and Khalispur and by December 7, the capture of Jessore, Jhenidah and Kalura was complete. Jessore cantonment was captured by noon on December 7. Another column advanced in an encircling move and placed roadblocks at Pachun, Durgapur and Uttar Narayanpur. A brigade column captured Jhenidah by 4 P.M. and another column captured Meherpur and pushed up towards Kushtia. While the mopping up operations continued, an Indian Army column belonging to 2 Corps continued to pursue the enemy towards Khulna. Roadblocks were placed beyond Khulna to prevent enemy escapes. Rupdia on the way to Khulna was captured on December 8. Noapara was encircled and Lebutala captured.

The Indian Army had another secret punch which was called Bengal Area and was in charge of the Khulna-Satkhira region. They too advanced with the general offensive, captured Kaligunj on December 7 on their northbound push, joined the main column and reached Magura with the idea of securing the Madhumati Ferry for crossing. Arms and ammunitions at Jessore and Jhenidah abandoned by the Pakistan Army would have surprised any commander fighting a war. Over 6,000 tons of ammunitions were captured in Jessore and 1,200 tons in Jhenidah.

On December 9, the men of 2 Corps faced heavy resistance in capturing Kushtia. Both the Indian as well as the enemy troops suffered heavy losses. In this connection, it is interesting



to note that Kushtia changed hands three times. First it belonged to the Pakistan Army; it was captured later by the *Mukti Bahini* and recaptured by the Pakistani troops who again lost it to Indian forces. Meanwhile, the Bengal Area boys were on the west bank of Madhumati and the Pakistan Army was holding the eastern bank. The BSF boys who 'were used to eliminating enemy pockets left behind, captured Harishankar and a brigade column captured Chengutia on the Jessore-Khulna axis. By the following day, Phultala, Noapara and Satkhira had fallen to the advancing Indian troops and were already secured.

By this time, complete air superiority of the Indian Air Force having been established, mounting air operations harassed the enemy everywhere sinking their rivercraft as these were crossing rivers at night. They were strafed while crossing the Madhumati and also the Meghna. By December 11 many rivercraft in Barisal, Chalna, Chandpur and Narayanganj area had been destroyed including eight medium ships, seven gunboats and 11 motor-boats. The same day, the brigade column captured Kushtia in the morning and confronted the Pakistan Army at Daulatpur near Khulna, where they had a strong defence. The Pakistan Army fleeing from Kushtia, blew up a span of the Hardinge Bridge after withdrawing to the north of the Padma. The IAF did not stay idle. It bombed or strafed Kushtia, the Hardinge Bridge, Pirganj and Gobindaganj during the same day including Sirajganj and Fulcharighat where important ferry arrangements had been made by the enemy.

December 12-13: Advance towards Khulna continued after securing Daulatpur. The column which was stalled on the south of Hardinge Bridge captured six 120 mm mortars, four mortars (3.7), six recoilless guns and 60 vehicles from the retreating Pakistan Army. Meanwhile, the Khulna garrison was encircled. The encircled area was bombed and strafed. On December 14, progress of the 2 Corps was nil and heavy enemy resistance continued around the Khulna area where the enemy had linear defence and fortified positions. A fresh attack was launched. The ring around Dacca had been closed by December 15. Pakistan Army around Khulna was offering stiff resistance and 2 Corps had to mount three attacks to clear the enemy

pockets without success. A battalion column, however, cleared Shiromani and captured Shyamgunj.

**33 Corps:** When the general offensive started on December 3, Lieutenant-General Thapan's men captured Thakurgaon, where the *Mukti Bahini* had previously occupied a salient. Another column captured Phulbari and Charkhai the same day. The troops captured arms, ammunitions, two diesel locomotives and ten bogies. The BSF unit attached to 33 Corps captured Ruhea on December 4. The next day a ferry was captured near Birgunj and in the evening Birgunj fell to the advancing Indian Army. Another column cleared Hatibandha, Bhotemari and Kurigram. Nawabgunj was captured, Mirzagunj Hat and Chila Hati were occupied the same day. On December 6, the men of 33 Corps captured Lalmonirhat, a major railway junction and garrison with the help of the *Mukti Bahini*. The Dangapara railway station was captured on December 7. By December 8, Birgunj had been captured by a brigade column. The Pakistan 16 Division elements made three counter-attacks on the advancing Indian Army but failed to dislodge them. The 32 Baluch fought well but their commanding officer was killed. When the enemy fell back the road to Palashbari was cleared. One Battalion column captured the Dangapara village while a brigade column taking a different route captured Baduria and Rajitpur. A place called Naktara was occupied by the midnight of December 9: Palashbari was also captured. On December 10 the armour of 33 Corps raided Dinajpur in a surprise attack and destroyed enemy tanks and captured a 57 mm recoilless gun. Durran and Jotshriram were subsequently captured. Another BSF column forced the Pakistani troops to withdraw from Gaibandha. They also cut off the Pakistani troops' route to the south. The boxing of the Pakistani Army in this area forced them to fight fiercely for a breakthrough of the cordon. On December 11, they counter-attacked twice and in the intensive fighting that followed both the Indian and Pakistani troops suffered heavy casualties. While a part of the force engaged the Pakistan Army, a brigade column by-passed and secured Bispara, Raigram and Chandipur. Earlier Dangapara was captured from a Pakistani company, which was supported by a battalion of 4 Frontier Force of Pakistan with six Chaffee tanks. Out of these, two

tanks and seven guns (105 mm) and two RCLs were captured. In Dangapara action alone, 60 Pakistani soldiers were killed; 30 dead bodies were counted the same day at Hariharpur. The next day the column from Gobindagunj secured Lakshimpur and another brigade column captured Horghat.

December 13: Lakshimpur secured, dash made for Bogra; Commanding Officer and four other officers of the 32 Baluch Regiment captured. Khetlal, Jaipurhat and Khansama fell like nine pins. On December 15, the men of the 33 Corps of the Indian Army and BSF captured Mitrapukur, Nilphamari and Kishoregunj. Before the *coup de grace* on December 16, the 33 Corps men forced 20 officers and 600 other ranks of the Pakistan Army belonging to 4 Frontier Force, 13 Frontier Force and 38 Baluch regiment to surrender near Bogra. The Pirgunj-Rangpur area was cleared the same day by a brigade column. Mitrapukur was captured and Nilphamari finally fell and was secured by the midnight of December 15. Kishoregunj was captured by the *Mukti Bahini* and the Border Security Force on December 16. When Saidpur, known as the "Bihar Shariff" because of the Bihari refugee concentration there, was captured about 5,000 Pakistani soldiers, civilian officers, and para-military men were taken prisoner; with them were taken seven Chaffee tanks, 12 (105 mm) guns and four 120 mm mortars. Three more Chaffee tanks were captured the same day from areas near Khansama. So the 33 Corps as the head of the sledgehammer struck hard and gave its own *coup de grace* even before the surrender terms were negotiated.

**4 Corps:** Lieutenant-General Sagat Singh was the first to reach Dacca. Like a hot knife through butter, General Sagat Singh's men sliced through all the enemy defences and pushed to Dacca in record time. On the way they had to face heavy resistance. Their first prize was Shamshernagar on 4 December 1971 at 11 A.M. With Shamshernagar came an important airfield in the hands of the Indian Army. While one column advanced towards Munshi Bazar, the other captured Gazipur on the night of 4-5 December. Another thrust developed at Akhaura, where heavy fighting started from the very beginning. Capturing Akhaura and Ganganagar, troops rushed towards Laksham, an important road and railway junction. On December 6, a

column of the 4 Corps captured seven Pakistani vehicles full of soldiers. They were all equipped and the ambush allowed General Sagat Singh's men to capture Sultanpur. *Mukti Bahini* was quite active in this area and with simultaneous operations with the army, they cleared Laksham, captured Feni, got to Rezumia Bridge and reached Gangadhar Bazar.

While Munshi Bazar had been captured earlier by 4 Corps by two different brigade attacks on December 6, another brigade column proceeded to Maulvi Bazar from Shamshernagar and occupied part of it by the evening of December 7. Here too, the tactics of by-passing and setting roadblocks behind the enemy were used. In Comilla sector, while elements of 4 Corps were fighting the Pakistani troops at Jajigunj, others by-passed Laksham and set up blocks beyond. Another thrust was made towards Sylhet. Meanwhile, a column captured Brahmanbaria and continued to rush towards Ashugunj. Here the troops force marched about 60 miles in one day, set roadblocks and fought the Pakistan Army at Ashugunj without any rest. They had been on their feet for almost 36 hours to take advantage of the element of surprise and speed.

Simultaneously, a brigade column secured Daudkandi on the morning of December 8 and all these columns were able to cut off all routes to Comilla. The fate of Mynamati Cantonment was also sealed. In this sector, the Indian Army got close air support from the Agartala base. Maulvi Bazar, Ashugunj and Laksham were severely bombed and rocketed and fleeing Pakistani troops were strafed while crossing the Padma and the Meghna. In strategic bombings, two goods trains—one near Bamandanga and the other near Brahmanbaria near Comilla—were also bombed when the 4 Corps commander asked for air strikes. Similar air strikes were made in the Laksham area. The navy too, went into action. Cox's Bazar was bombed and the power house was destroyed by the carrier-based aircraft. In the Laksham air strikes, four diesel engines and 20 railway bogies were destroyed.

In the Sylhet area, a brigade column reached Sherpur Ferry on December 9, and another column joined with the other coming from Sylhet near Fenchugunj. The columns from Daudkandi attacked Mynamati Cantonment once the possible

routes of reinforcement were sealed. Another hook crossed Hajigunj and captured Chandpur, opening the sluice for the tidal wave to reach Dacca. The air force on strike call from the Indian commander created havoc among the Pakistani troops on the river. They were sitting ducks and a steamer with 400 Pakistani troops was sunk in an air attack. The Meghna was crossed near Ashugunj in heli-borne operations. Steamers, country boats and rubber boats with outboard motors were used for the crossing. Meanwhile, Noakhali was captured by *Mukti Bahini*. On December 11, paratroops were landed to help in the crossing and the Indian brigade completed the crossing in the morning. The Chandpur column cleared Bheramara.

To hasten the fall of Dacca, the 23 Div. from Comilla and the Dacca Column with 57 Mountain Brigade were formed. Short of certain elements and in reorganised strength, a brigade was formed on the east bank of Lakya river on the morning of December 13 and was called the Dacca Column. They had four battalions. Meanwhile, another brigade advanced on the Tengail-Dacca axis and reached Savar, a place noted for its sweets. There the Indians captured the transmitting station. This was on December 15. Within a few hours, the 57 Mountain Brigade reached Tungi, the industrial suburb of Dacca. So, in all, three brigades were bound for Dacca and were in various positions to block the enemy retreat as well. Meanwhile, one column was sent towards Chittagong. The noose was tightening around Dacca. In the rest of the area isolated resistance continued; Sylhet, Khulna, and Mynamati were holding on. India launched psychological warfare by hitting the enemy hard and appealing to them to surrender promising them fair treatment. The dilemma for Niazi was almost over. He had no choice. The game was up.

It will be uncharitable not to mention the 101 Communication Zone with HQ at Gauhati. The advance of this brigade towards Tengail and then towards Dacca was more spectacular. They captured Tengail with the help of para drops and then secured Mirzapur. Help from the *Mukti Bahini* in Tengail area was considerable. They also took a heavy beating when their para drops were attacked by the withdrawing enemy from Mymensingh and Madhupur. But they gave a good account of themselves,

killing 180 Pakistani soldiers and capturing two officers, 17 other ranks and about 30 Razakars. They also captured Jamalpur. Similarly, the Bengal Area group, working upwards from opposite Taki in West Bengal, helped the 2 Corps to reach Khulna with remarkable ease, and it was their help which convinced the Pakistan Army that the main thrust was coming from the one-eyed General Raina, crossing the river at Magura. This was the best decoy to allow General Sagat Singh and his men to finish the marathon in the record time of 13 days.

The Chief of Army Staff, General Manekshaw, gave General A.A.K. Niazi an option to bow out through repeated radio broadcasts to save his men who were all surrounded and could be destroyed with air strikes and by tightening the noose around them. In spite of the madness and the bloodbath through which the Pakistan Army passed and took pride in, Niazi for once behaved like a sane and vanquished General. He asked for a cease-fire on December 15 and this was granted by Manekshaw from 5 P.M. on December 15 to 9 A.M. on December 16. While negotiating the surrender offer, General Niazi was biding for time, perhaps also, for some response from Islamabad. None came; the mirage of the American Navy rescuing the trapped Pakistani troops also proved to be illusive. Asking for another extension of the limit to 3 P.M. on December 16, and finding no alternative, General Niazi capitulated.

While the 4 Corps from Agartala and the 101 Communication men were leap-frogging towards Dacca, it was the commander of the paratroop battalion who reached Dacca first. Redirected by the GOC to follow the Kilakir-Manikgunj Road, the battalion raced the whole night from Tengail and before dawn was leaning on the defences of Dacca, within two miles of the city limit. When the para battalion reached Dacca, the GOC, General Gandharva Nagra, joined the paratroopers and entered the city. He knew General Niazi from the old days when he was Military Adviser to the Indian High Commissioner in Karachi. According to Major-General D.K. Palit, "He [Nagra] had known Niazi and now he decided to contribute his mite toward softening up the Pak General. He sent his ADC, accompanied by the adjutant of the para battalion, in a jeep under a truce flag, with a message for Niazi—a message that was to echo around the

news world: 'My dear Abdullah, I am here. The game is up. I suggest you give yourself up to me and I will look after you'."

The game had been up even before December 16 when Niazi saw the encirclement being completed, his men isolated in penny packets and cantonments, without any hope of a breakthrough and Islamabad indulging in day-dreaming without any plan to save the men in East Pakistan. In desperation, Niazi tried to communicate to Delhi by sending a message through the American Embassy in New Delhi. Without the knowledge of Delhi, the American Embassy relayed the message to Washington, and "Bill" Rogers, the Secretary of State, took the message to White House. President Nixon seized upon the opportunity to give his opinion even without consulting General Yahya that surrender by Pakistani forces in the Eastern theatre should not be encouraged without the consent of General Yahya Khan. It is believed that Yahya took the cue from the attitude of his American masters.

India too got wind of the surrender offer, which was not unconditional. General Niazi made a last bid to save his troops by pleading for a cease-fire and safe passage for his troops to West Pakistan. No military commander, let alone Manekshaw, would agree to allow the finest trained troops to leave the encirclement with a safe passage to fight another day on some other front. So, the offer was turned down in New Delhi, though it did not come officially. India tried to contact General Yahya Khan, Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army but could not contact him on December 15. All attempts to contact him from 11 P.M. till early morning of December 16 failed. Though no one in Pakistan threw any light on General Yahya Khan's movement during the evening and till the early morning of December 16, there are two theories advanced by knowledgeable circles. One theory is that the General took to excessive drinking during the last stage of his rule and perhaps the higher echelons of the Pakistani Army and administration could not rouse him or did not dare intrude into his secret hideout. The other one, more plausible, is that though the Americans washed their hands publicly of the whole business, President Nixon asked General Yahya to go into hiding to avoid contact, while the

Seventh Fleet was steaming towards the Bay of Bengal in a demonstration of a show of force, which might pay off. The Seventh Fleet complicated matters. The mood in India then was a mood of determination and Mrs Indira Gandhi was left with no other option but to hold on to her decision without backing out. In fact, the Indian Navy, though of very little use against the mighty *Enterprise* and the Task Force of the US Seventh fleet, was poised for a fight knowing well that they would lose; so was the Indian Air Force.

If the Seventh Fleet had made for Chittagong or evacuated the surrounded Pakistani troops in East Pakistan, President Nixon would have had a new area of confrontation in South Asia. On the other hand if the Seventh Fleet were attacked the Americans would have to strike back in retaliation. The *Anderson Papers*, published later, also revealed the duplicity and injudicious steps by the United States and her suicidal desire to get involved in South Asia. The Seventh Fleet included the nuclear-powered aircraft-carrier *Enterprise* equipped to launch the Phantom aircraft fitted with nuclear warheads, commando carrier, the *Tripoli*, a guided missile frigate, a number of destroyers and supply and landing ships.

Fortunately, the White House heeded the Indian warning, though the threat to the mighty American war machine was slight, the mood prevalent in the country was gauged correctly, and the Nixon administration knew that it could not possibly launch a nuclear attack on India. On the other hand, America would lose face in South Asia in case of even an ineffective attack on the *Enterprise* by the Indian Air Force or the Indian Navy. The American Government gave a very unconvincing argument to justify the despatch of the Seventh Fleet. But political analysts saw in the move America's subtle game in assuring Pakistan that the security treaty through which Pakistan was supposed to get American help, was not dead after all. At the same time the USA wanted to avoid another conflict like the one in Viet Nam in South Asia. What a consolation for Pakistan! In any case it was a gamble but it did not pay off because India had the determined leadership of Mrs Gandhi, who never faltered under pressure.

At 1 P.M. on 16 December 1971, exactly 12 days after the



war had started, Major-General J.F.R. Jacob, the Chief of Staff of the Eastern Command flew in a helicopter to Dacca to negotiate the surrender terms. The news leaked out and the whole country was in a state of emotionally charged expectation. There were jubilations in Calcutta and the whole city burst into life with fire-crackers exploding all around. The blackout was lifted by 8 P.M.

When the news of General Jacob's flight was conveyed to the sector commanders, General Nagra, amidst uproarious scenes of jubilation, entered the Dacca city with his four battalions from the north-west at 3 P.M. Within two hours of General Jacob's heli-rush to Dacca, the draft instrument of surrender was on Niazi's table and accepted by him. The GOC-in-C, Eastern Command, Lieutenant General, Jagjit Singh Aurora left in another helicopter accompanied by Air Marshal Dewan, AOC-in-C, Eastern Air Command, Vice-Admiral Krishnan, FOC-in-C, Eastern Naval Command, and Group Captain Khondkar, Chief of Staff of Bangladesh *Mukti Bahini* High Command. The instrument of surrender was signed at the Dacca Race Course at 4.31 P.M. on 16 December 1971.

The picture of the Indo-Pakistan war will not be complete without at least a partial reference to the war on the Western front. Fighting in the West was serious for two reasons; the enemy knew that we had no territorial ambition either in the East or in the West but that we would use whatever territory we could capture in the West as a lever. Pakistan on her part, was determined not to lose any territory as it would be fatal politically. Secondly, any territory gained by Pakistan in the West could be used as a bargain for the hopeless situation that would result in the Eastern sector. In the Western sector, the battle areas could be divided into Chhamb sector, Poonch sector, Punjab sector, Kargil sector, Chicken Neck salient east of Jammu, Shakargarh sector, Ramgarh sector and Sind sector.

From the Indian standpoint, the Chhamb sector was the most vulnerable for the use of armour and deployment of troops; the terrain was unfavourable and the main defence would be too vulnerable on the West of Munnawar Tawi river. In the 1965 war, Pakistan had occupied considerable territory in this

sector. This time, however, better prepared Pakistan attacked on the evening of December 3 in this sector with four infantry brigades, one armour brigade and eight artillery regiments; they also got close air support during the attack. Against this, India could deploy only one brigade and a squadron of tanks on the west of the river. The battle in this region raged for about 72 hours during which India pressed three more companies of infantry and two more squadrons of armour. When the pressure was unbearable, the Indian defence was withdrawn on the east of the river. Pakistan in a determined attack crossed the river and established a lodgement on the eastern bank. But they had to withdraw in the face of severe air attacks; there were 200 sorties by IAF in that small area. The Pakistan Army was pushed back on 9-10 December after suffering heavy casualties. India lost 17 tanks and one field gun and two anti-aircraft guns against Pakistan's 36 tanks. From the Indian side, 440 men were killed in this action, 723 wounded and 190 missing. Pakistan lost 1,350 men, over 4,130 were wounded and 27 of their men were captured. From the military point of view this attack ended in failure because Pakistan lost about 20 per cent of its men and gained nothing. But the enemy's doggedness was evident from the number of men sacrificed.

The attack against Poonch was a three-pronged one with about a division of the Pakistan Army, the idea was to encircle and cut it off from the rest. But this attack could be beaten back by the exemplary and determined support of the Indian Air Force. Most of the enemy tanks, field guns and vehicles were shot up. When the attack was blunted, the Indian troops counter-attacked on December 10 and secured two hill features on the Pakistan side of the cease-fire line and improved the Indian defence in this sector. One hundred and thirty Indian soldiers were killed, whereas Pakistani losses mounted to 276 killed, 800 wounded and 32 taken prisoner. In this sector, the Indian Air Force used all types of planes from AN-12 to the vintage Vampires. In fact, the Vampires and the Gnats proved very effective in their ground-support role.

In the Punjab sector too, the Pakistani troops attacked with a 4:1 ratio and the massive thrust of December 3-4 helped Pakistan to occupy certain territories in Fazilka. Indian troops

had to take a number of defensive actions, including an attack on Dera Baba Nanak, which forestalled the major enemy attack. In this action, India lost 371 men killed, 888 wounded and 348 either taken prisoner or missing; Pakistani losses were 1,439 killed, 2,226 wounded and 167 taken prisoner by India.

In the Kargil sector and in the Chicken Neck salient, Indian troops occupied, Pakistan territory and blunted the edge of the Pakistani attack. Another major threat was the Shakargarh sector where the Indian communication line with Kashmir could be threatened. Knowing the intention of the enemy to cut off Kashmir from the rest of the country, Indian troops attacked with two major hooks after the First Corps was moved near the area. Pakistan visualised the Indian predicament in case of an attack and expected a massive counter attack launched by India. To meet this, they had prepared extensive field fortifications, anti-tank ditches and trenches, deployed tanks and laid mines extensively. This slowed down the Indian progress and it was only on the day of the cease-fire that the Indian Army could proceed on the road from Zafarwal to Shakargarh. Enemy casualties in this sector were only slightly more than Indian casualties. India advanced about 19 kilometres in this sector; nine Pakistani tanks were captured and 41 destroyed.

In the Ramgarh sector too, Pakistan lost 18 tanks. In the Sind sector, the Indian Army occupied 7,000 square kilometres of enemy territory. The number of Pak troops killed in the Western sector was 3,000 and 9,500 wounded. Thus, till the time of the cease-fire, India thwarted all ambitions of Pakistan and the idea of a bargain was buried for good. Philosophically speaking this victory was taken for granted; it had to happen. Why it had not happened earlier is a different question. The consummate hatred with which the leaders of Pakistan looked at India could have but led to only one conclusion--war.

How can [our] army fight and win against an Army that is five times its size? It would be a military lunacy for me to take them on. But if we are attacked... we will fight back.... The Indians have a big war machine that is self-sufficient in many respects. If they can lob over 3,000 shells in a day that means they have plenty of ammunition on hand. It's a luxury our Army cannot afford.

The sanity that prodded General Yahya Khan to utter these words left him within a few days as he was heard saying: "Soon I shall be fighting in the front." The only answer to all these anti-India moorings of Pakistan's foreign policy can be found in the fact that not a single government in Pakistan was popular, and responsible. So the Pakistani rulers had to buy popularity by sabre rattling. In defeat, they brought down the country's prestige to the bottom but they themselves could afford the luxury of the Riviera or the West End of London because they had made a formidable pile during their rule by distributing favours to a corrupt coterie. Iskander Mirza had done the same, so had Ayub and quite a few others.

The loss of life and limb was quite heavy in this war. Indian officers and men killed in both sectors numbered 3,241; wounded were 8,561; 302 were missing and 529 were taken prisoner. Against this, Pakistan lost 11,400 men. 18,475 were wounded and over 75,285 men from the army and para-military services were taken prisoner. In terms of economic consequences, the war forced India to abandon some of its major development projects. The economic strain on the whole country was unprecedented and the commitment to the cause of Bangladesh before the war and after, quite substantial. And this commitment would continue so long as India and Bangladesh remained friends. The 1971 war, however, not only broke the back of Pakistan but also made it impossible for that country to maintain as big an army as it had before Bangladesh became independent.

## CHAPTER NINE

### Whither Bangladesh

So, Bangladesh was born. Photographs of Jinnah and Yahya Khan came tumbling down and those of Mujib went up in millions of Bengali homes in Bangladesh and abroad. But the leader was still in prison and speculations were rife on Mujib's safety and fate. As Tajuddin Ahmed and his Cabinet colleagues were firmly in the saddle in the East, the redoubtable Bhutto reappeared on the Western horizon.

He might have acted in concert with the army in Pakistan, but Bhutto was no fool and the first thing he did was to try to salvage what was left—his reputation. He apparently met Mujib and repeated the old offer, which in fact had been agreed to by Mujib at the round table in Dacca, of a loose federation of Pakistan. It goes without saying that he promised to release him on certain conditions. Mujib knew that Bhutto's game was up; so he played possum by telling Bhutto that he had hardly any news of what was happening in Bangladesh and was unable to make any commitment without consulting his people. Bhutto's gamble did not pay off as international pressure mounted for Mujib's release. Even the American administration, which had all through backed Pakistan, requested Bhutto to release Mujib. All the Powers who maintained a studied aloofness got a new horse to ride and they started vying for the favour of this new nation; so that they might create a suitable climate for reaping economic gains.

But it was Britain which ultimately won the race. Whether it was Mujib's own desire or Bhutto's plan is not known, but the wire services flashed the message on January 6 that Mujib

had been flown to an unknown destination. He was heading for Britain, and India got in touch with the Bangladesh Government. His trusted lieutenant, Tajuddin Ahmed, got in touch with him over the telephone and the Bangladesh representatives in London dished up to him the entire history of the ten months. That was the moment when Mujib made his Press statement in London. While talking to his colleagues over the telephone from London, the Sheikh repeatedly asked whether Bangladesh was really free; with tears in their eyes, all of them assured him that it was really so and they were speaking to him from the seat of power, the Bangabhavan in Dacca. Though Air India was ready with a special aircraft to bring Mujib home, Britain decided to show the depth of her feeling for Bangladesh by flying Mujib in a Royal Air Force Comet via New Delhi with regal ostentation.

Among all the Powers that supported the cause of Bangladesh, Britain's was a very calculated and studied support. While the British Government officially did not support the movement, delegations of Members of Parliament, quietly sponsored by the Government visited Bangladesh and Pakistan, talked in India and all the time kept the tone mild. Both the Labour as well the Conservative MPs supported the cause and they launched campaigns among Members of Parliament to bring a resolution in the House supporting the cause of Bangladesh. Hundreds of important personalities, church groups, politicians and statesmen around the world blamed Pakistan for the genocide committed in Bangladesh. Of course, 90 per cent of the credit for mobilising this support goes to India and to Mrs Gandhi. Even the visit of a delegation from Bangladesh to the United Nations and various other countries for lobbying was actively sponsored by India.

The tragedy in Bangladesh or the break-up of Pakistan was not the personal tragedy of Yahya Khan; but of the whole nation, of missed opportunities and of the collective failure of leadership. In fact the coup of 1969 was the cause of the downfall of General Yahya. He promised to give the country a fair election. This he did. And this was the reason for his downfall. Like all dictators all over the world, Yahya did not look far ahead; if he had he would have made concessions gradually and could have kept Pakistan in one piece. But Mujib was destined to

be Prime Minister of his free Bangladesh and he won in the long run. Supporting him and his people was a country of over 500 million people with a determined woman at the helm who was ready to use not only her resources but her armed services too. Nowhere in the history of the world has another nation committed so much for so little personal gain.

What India wanted was permanent peace in the subcontinent. Breaking up Pakistan's military machine was the only answer; if in that process a secular and socialistic Bangladesh was born, India could feel doubly happy.

It will be wrong, however, to deny that contacts at a non-official level between the present leadership of Bangladesh and India had been maintained since early 1952. When Maulana Bhasani met India's C.C. Desai (the then High Commissioner for India in Pakistan) at a dance performance, tactfully arranged at the girls' school run by the jute magnate R.P. Saha in Tengail, the thought of an independent Bangladesh was at the back of his mind. This was a universal desire in East Bengal and was kindled by bloodshed, rape, arson and looting.

When in an interview at Dacca, Sheikh Mujib was asked about the allegations of harbouring collaborators within his government, Mujib's reply was simple: "I do not go by the reports, I judge people by their loyalty to me and don't forget that to get the task done within a short time I need people who will follow me blindly and loyally." This is one side of the picture, though the cynics would comment that only a person with a streak of arrogance or perhaps a streak of dictatorship in him would talk like this. But Mujib was perfectly honest when he said it. His is a government not formed through revolution but through a war in which 90 per cent of the bureaucrats did not take any part at all. Those who had fought did not belong to the bureaucracy. And Sheikh Mujib too is surrounded by the ex-CSP (Central Service of Pakistan) officers who have been indoctrinated to hate India for the last 25 years.

Even now they point to the sandy islands on the Padma and grouse that these are a result of the Farakka barrage which, incidentally, is still incomplete. Such is the effect of pernicious propaganda. A unique situation has developed when Mujib wants to maintain the best of relations with India for the sake

of his country while his administration pulls him in the opposite direction. He is a courageous leader but no wizard. He knows that the forces of communalism, extremism and pressure groups of bureaucrats have combined to get him out of office; they are only waiting to see his charisma wear off. On the other hand, the Maulana had joined forces with the left extremists and is determined to embarrass him and his government without giving them any respite. In a country where three million people have been rendered homeless, where over six million units of houses have been destroyed and where more than a million women have been raped and three-fourths of them are carrying the seeds of the predator, the rascal army, it is not an easy task to bring a miracle in a moment. On top of these, opportunists and adventurers have trickled into Mujib's own Awami League. Corruption is rampant, relief materials are not being properly distributed and the possibility of riots over the return of evacuee property is threatening the very base of the democracy run by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Mujib himself admitted to the head of a foreign relief agency that he could not lean any more on his Awami League colleagues or the government officials for equitable distribution of relief among the Hindu and Muslim evacuees. Even in his home town, Gopalganj, he regretted, he has heard of discrimination. In another inner party meeting of the Awami League MCAs (Members of the Constituent Assembly) he threatened that if they were not ready to eradicate corruption from the party, he would rather join the NAP (National Awami Party), who were more honest than his own partymen. No wonder that he could not reward those officers who had fought by the side of the *Mukti Bahini*; they have become outcasts and are sarcastically called "Haji." The insinuation is very clear. By coming to India, they should not claim the honour which a Muslim visiting Mecca can claim.

The other threat against him are the organised middle class armchair intellectuals. It can hardly be denied that a section of the people in East Pakistan who had access to the army or to the coterie of officials distributing favours became prosperous. There are also others who had filled the vacuum created by the mass exodus of the Hindu middle class from East Pakistan after the general squeeze was on. They made a tidy pile, enjoying



the benefits of foreign cars, junkets abroad and all the amenities of a modern industrialised society in a land still predominantly agricultural. Dacca presents the unique spectacle of teenage boys holding car licences or driving posh cars, though the country does not produce a single vehicle. Some people are used to the luxury of refrigerators, when not one is produced within the country. In Dacca, a CSP officer earning Rs 1,500 per month can afford the luxury of two foreign cars, whereas in the countryside, the farmers live down to their bare bones.

They have little land to till and are handicapped by want of fertilizer and irrigation facilities. They have no electricity. They groan under the oppressive laws which provide nothing for the poor. Even the bogey of Indian expansionism failed to stir them from the stupor in which they had fallen after a quarter century of neglect and apathy. So, Mujib has two alternatives before him. He can give a better life and better opportunities to the 90 per cent of his silent majority who live in the remote villages or he can satisfy the marginal but vocal few living in the cities. He needs investment and huge finance to be pumped into Bangladesh to revive the moribund economy.

The take off stage is a distant dream. He will have to provide for public transportation in place of posh cars; provide for salt, sugar, coal, kerosene and even matchboxes instead of cosmetics and electrical gadgets. His talk of socialism will lead him nowhere unless he can build up a cadre dedicated not only to carrying his message to the people but acting accordingly. He will have to fight the bogey of communalism and the spate of anti-India campaigns. Above all, he will have to fight the international intrigues which are gradually engulfing his country. He received friendly help from the Soviet Union and India, without which the country would never have been independent; at the same time, he has inherited a bureaucracy and an intelligentsia of which 90 per cent had been trained in the United States or other countries friendly towards Pakistan. He has got to watch out for the pro-Peking factions of the Communists who have joined forces with Maulana Bhasani and he will have to look out for the other foreign influences which threaten to make his country a hotbed of intrigue and bring instability.

For India, Mujib is the safest bet. And for Bangladesh it is either Mujib or nothing. There is hardly any leader in Bangladesh who could step into his shoes. Without him, factionalism, communal feuds and internecine rivalry within the Awami League will undermine the stability of the country, which at this juncture it can hardly afford. And these are the circumstances that force Mujib to look towards India more and more. He can hardly afford a big army, the totally wrecked economy of the country does not permit it and he knows that the power vacuum cannot continue. On the other hand, he feels that every anti-India poster pasted on the wall means that the forces unfriendly to his country are gaining a fresh foothold in Bangladesh. The whispering campaign of "food scarcity because India is taking away everything," and "after Pakistan, Indian imperialism" etc. make him more and more conscious of the gravity of the situation. Mujib needs Indian investment but the political forces opposed to India are bound to make propaganda out of it. And he is hardly in a position to offer any *quid pro quo* to any other nation intending to invest in Bangladesh. The result has been slow progress; bilateral trade between the two countries could not get off the ground even two months after the joint declaration by the Prime Ministers of India and Bangladesh.

The people of Bangladesh are touchy about India in spite of what India did for them. And this sensitivity is so contagious that even Indians have felt it and are talking about it. Mujib knows it but he is helpless. He has got to have a firmer grip before he can afford to do anything. And with 60 per cent of the arms remaining in the hands of undesirable elements, he has got his hands full. There is also the feeling of illwill between the newly recruited *Mukti Bahini* and the regular Bengal Regiment which will ultimately form the backbone of a Bangladesh Army, however small that might be.

It was only recently that there would have been a showdown in Dacca had not Mujib tactfully managed to intervene. Near the Dacca Race Course both sides took up arms and positions to start a shooting war. The new Commander-in-Chief of the Bangladesh Army, Colonel Osmani not only failed to control them but was himself threatened at the point of a gun. Mujib

at his own risk had to face the challenge and bring the situation under control.

There is no denying the fact that unauthorised border trade continues and it continues according to the laws of economics, based on the theory of demand and supply. Without any gold reserves, Bangladesh currency today has little value even in India. For the essential items that people from the border buy in India, they can hardly pay in cash because in non-official business that is not yet legal tender. So they barter rice and fish and other raw materials even under-cutting the price, which they make good by selling the products taken from India at a high premium. Border smuggling is a common thing along any border, and where there is a long border, and where one country hardly maintains a border force and machinery to prevent smuggling, it is bound to continue. But the resentment against smuggling is chiefly calculated to drive a wedge between India and Bangladesh and make the country as hostile to India as Pakistan had been for 25 years. Mujib, not that he would like to, cannot whip the dead horse of Indian imperialism back into life. At the same time, India cannot afford to see Bangladesh dying an economic death which would again push the refugees across the Indian border. Both countries have got to work hard for the common goal and that is possible only through tolerance and mutual trust.

To cite an example, when Mrs Gandhi announced the total withdrawal of the Indian Army, which was already being phased out, by 25 March 1972, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman personally requested her to leave behind at least a brigade of the Indian Army in Bangladesh. But Mujib's Defence Minister Colonel M.A.G. Osmani was against it and Mujib had to overrule his decision and later relieve him from the post of Chief of Staff. But Mrs Gandhi was wise and pulled out the Indian armed forces from Bangladesh well before the deadline stipulated mutually.

The Indian Army, during its operation in Bangladesh, tried to inflict minimum damage to the lines of communication and installations. In the whole city of Dacca, only one bomb fell, and that on a road leading to the city from the airfield. Only the two military airfields were bombed and the Governor's

residence was rocketed. Damage to bridges by the army was kept to a minimum, but the scorched earth policy followed by the Pakistan Army had done considerable damage to the lines of communication. Before their withdrawal the Indian Army had repaired 90 bridges including the 1,400 feet long bridge over the Madhumati river. Jetties were constructed, telephone exchanges repaired and new ones erected, ferries commissioned and 75 per cent of the lines of communication like roads and the railways had been restored by the engineers of the Indian Army. Yet, when the posters and the pamphlets talk about the alleged "misdemeanour" of the Indian Army, the forces at work to embarrass Mujib become too evident.

In spite of India's commitment of five million pound sterling to revamp the Bangladesh economy, and her help of 17 crores of rupees, the needs of Bangladesh can hardly be met. It needs almost everything from needles to aeroplanes and it is quite natural that Big Powers with more resources than India will enter the arena and will want their pound of flesh.

It is not possible for India to compete with them with her slender resources especially with the many pressing problems at home. Mrs Gandhi too is answerable to her people if Bangladesh jeopardises India's own development efforts. She has got to strike a balance and in doing that if she fails to meet the expectation of the devastated Bangladesh, it will be just too bad. But this is a situation not inconceivable.

The Prime Minister, even her critics will admit, has an astute sense of timing. When she threw out the Finance Minister, Morarji Desai, some people in India thought that the Congress Party would not survive the deliberate disaster. They were proved wrong. Also, when she went in for the mid-term poll, people thought she was digging her grave, but she came back not only with an absolute majority but with a mandate. And when everyone was blaming her for withholding troops even when the security of the country was being threatened, she bided her time and ordered the army to move in and help the *Mukti Bahini* only when the international situation was in favour of India and the Big Powers had been effectively neutralised.

Her policy towards Bangladesh is commendable also. She is in favour of a realistic, pragmatic and formal relationship

with Bangladesh and the friendly but casual way the two countries are moving together, cannot but indicate the success of the policy. Tolerance, friendly reciprocity, friendly advice and no efforts to meddle in the affairs of Bangladesh should be the cornerstone of Indian policy towards Bangladesh. If Bangladesh wants to learn anything, let them learn by trial and error. The only snag in the whole policy planning by the Indian leaders is the Hindu population in Bangladesh. If the forces of secularism fail, which is most unlikely if Mujib gets a firm grip on the situation, India might be faced with the problem of evacuees again and that might embitter the relationship. But Mrs Gandhi has made it clear that the border has been sealed and that Hindus in Bangladesh are citizens of that country and should look to the Bangladesh leadership in case of trouble. India's safety lies in Mujib's strength. He is getting support from the Communist Party of Bangladesh and the National Awami Party (Muzaffar Ahmed group), who are very well organised. Mujib is also the safe bet for them because without Mujib there would be utter chaos. The priorities of the pro-Moscow Communists in Bangladesh and the policy dictated by Mujib based on socialism, secularism, nationalism and neutralism are almost identical. The forces of extremism both right and left are a threat to Mujib as much as to them, and all of them are aware that the Muslim League, the Jamait-e-Islam, Al Badrs and Al Shamims are far from dead, communal feelings still run high in a section of the so-called Awami Leaguers.

What Mujib is doing now is to strike a balance between the two extremes and consolidate his own position. Once he does it, the situation will be different and an economically strong Bangladesh will be an asset to India as well as a bulwark of peace, in the Indian subcontinent. But the fear of another civil war cannot be ruled out, and the next five years will be the most critical for Bangladesh as well as for India. Bangladesh is an economically viable nation but the finance that has to be injected to make that economy run and to give it the primary infrastructure should come from countries which have neither any political nor any economic designs on that nation. And for that, Bangladesh will have to be discriminatory about selecting the aid givers. But in this also, there are differences among

Mujibur Rahman of today is very different from the young man who had stood by H.S. Suhrawardy, and like others had drawn sustenance from communal politics. His baptism through fire is complete now. He has been to prison, seen bloodshed and has the confidence of his people. He will do well to fight the disparate forces with all the strength and courage he has. not only to remain in power, but to keep his country's hard-earned independence safe.

## Epilogue

In writing this book I had to lean heavily on sources of information all of whom were deeply involved in this event of the century. To many this event was of more significance than the transfer of power. Yet most of my informants are reticent to speak their minds on many questions, and that explains why there is so much unanswered in this book. A book of history based on political analysis cannot be complete in one volume, particularly when we have such inadequate, almost frigid reactions to the demands of history. I was surprised when I found that very few people had kept diaries of events. Only Tajuddin Ahmed did. If he is capable of subordinating the interests of his own country to truth, which is most unlikely, the world may know one facet of the truth. Most of the people in India and in Bangladesh are prepared to talk from memory; and memory often plays tricks. The result is disastrous for the faithful recording of history. Though this is not primarily a book of history, but of historical and political analysis based on facts and developments of recent origin, events, reactions, political thinking and ultimate objectives of the characters and the parties involved had to be recorded as faithfully as practicable.

But my informants could not be blamed totally either. Sometimes their knowledge was quite sketchy. In a major upheaval like this it takes time before the whole truth can be presented before the people with the objectivity that is beyond challenge.

Mrs Indira Gandhi was the undisputed leader of India during this period. She had the support of the nation as well as her Cabinet. But is that the exact picture? There are reasons to believe that there were some doubting Thomases inside the Cabinet; there were also others whose enthusiasm ran ahead

of our readiness. There were also talks in closed circles about a Cabinet Minister threatening to resign on the Bangladesh issue if the government did not act fast enough. The doubters took note of the ever increasing number of refugees and the consolidation of Pakistan's military might in East Pakistan. The enthusiasts thought that time was slipping fast and the situation called for immediate action. There were others in the Cabinet who felt that India should not take this "great risk" for the sake of the refugees who were not, in any case, the responsibility of India. Some, with a more parochial bias, thought that Mrs Gandhi was dragging India into a misadventure "to save West Bengal" from the menace of the extremists. I have heard responsible policy planners grumbling in Bombay and Delhi that India should not go to war for the refugees only. Others contended openly that Mrs Gandhi should not have allowed the refugees to cross into India in the first place as their getting good reception encouraged others to follow them; and Yahya was achieving what he wanted by hounding the Hindus out of East Pakistan.

Yet the dynamism and the personality of Mrs Gandhi smothered dissenting voices though the country often noted that Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram was making strong public statements. Many people interpreted these as "suitable noises" made by ambitious politicians who might later claim "I told you so but nobody listened to me." But privately, everybody was happy to leave the decision-making to the Prime Minister and when Pakistan bombed the Indian airfields she was left with little choice. It is true that India would have retaliated even if she were not prepared to face the challenge, as happened in 1965. The only difference this time was that India was not caught napping; the Prime Minister had seen to it, and six months' defence preparation was mounted to counter future surprise attacks.

It was a trial of patience for both countries. India was very near breaking point after shouldering the heavy burden of refugees for nine long months and watching helplessly a genocide committed under her very nose. Pakistan, on the other hand, was fast reaching breaking point with the *Mukti Bahini* soldiers gaining strength every day and with the economy and the



defence forces can certainly be trusted. If a war is to be started there are other opportunities and other advantages in plenty.

Why did Yahya start the war when he did? Some explanations have been given earlier but the rest should be left to posterity or to future military historians. There is, however, little doubt that several straws were breaking the camel's back and it is difficult to pick the last one. For one, the *Mukti Bahini* attacks continued to tell upon the morale and resources of the Pakistan Army. After the tank battle near Garibpur on the midnight of November 21, Pakistan might have been convinced that India could no longer be relied upon to tolerate the provocations and might even have been planning for a surprise attack. It must not have been unknown to them that India's defence preparations had reached a high pitch. We do not know what assurances Pakistan received from her allies and whether she wanted to put these to the test. But the experiment proved too costly.

The United States made sympathetic noises at the Security Council and as the *Anderson Papers* show, elsewhere. Radio Peking harped on the aggression theory. The Arab countries sat solidly on their haunches at the United Nations and registered their votes of indignation. Except a couple of fighters and bombers from Iran nobody came to Pakistan's help. The Chinese might have talked of the snowbound Himalayas and the USA of her continued pressure on India, but in effect, Pakistan was badly let down by her friends, and the most Pakistan can do is to take lessons from it or nurse a silent grievance. Even the Seventh Fleet manoeuvre in the Indian Ocean was more a stunt than a deliberate military move. The best that the mighty *Enterprise* could have done was to set up a beach-head at Chittagong and rescue the Pakistani Army. This too was unlikely. Though the United States has a genius for championing the "strong men" and the "losing side," the United States herself did not want to lose. The decision was taken from her hand by the swift movement of the liberation forces inside Bangladesh. Before the Seventh Fleet was anywhere within five hundred miles of Chittagong, Dacca had fallen. If the intention was to help Pakistan, the United States could have taken steps weeks, if not months, ahead. The show of force was completely useless before the determined stance of India. I have it on very senior

administration on the point of virtual collapse.

Interestingly enough, one school of thought in this country was firmly convinced that Pakistan would break up from her inner contradictions and India need do nothing at all. Others, however, felt that India would have to give the final *coup de grace* by a little push, and throw the tottering regime into the Bay of Bengal. Taking the suicidal step herself, Pakistan spared India the painful decision of going to war on her own.

As has been mentioned earlier, much has been made of Mrs Gandhi's absence from the capital on that fateful evening; also a different construction had been put on Jagjivan Ram's absence from Delhi on that day. I have seen people wink and exchange meaningful glances when these coincidences are referred to conspiratorially and more often openly. The implied suggestion is that this was a deliberate ruse before India started the war. Granting that there are "naturals" galore in this world, would such a move fool hard-headed diplomats and military leaders of the world, specially when our so-called intellectuals, who are not particularly well informed on these matters, were not deceived at all? Did not the Prime Minister go abroad a few months before the outbreak of war? Did not Nehru go abroad when the Chinese musketry was cocked ready?

It is only the naive who believe that the presence or absence of a Prime Minister in the country's capital matters so much, particularly when it is a question of war. It will be more naive to think that Pakistan, or any country for that matter, would start a war just because the Prime Minister of the enemy country is away from the capital. The fact is that decisions on war are taken from considerations other than the presence or absence of a Prime Minister at any given place. It may be a little different in case of nuclear war, but this was not one. In the United States a top security department man carrying a black box stays within a few feet of the President. The black box contains the Presidential prerogative and a computerised answer to retaliate in case of a nuclear attack. The President can order the ICBMs and the anti-missile missiles to be activated and moved into action. India is not a nuclear power and even in India, to reach the Prime Minister within a few minutes is not a major problem. And for these few minutes, the vigilant

defence forces can certainly be trusted. If a war is to be started there are other opportunities and other advantages in plenty.

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authority that had the United States taken sides openly, India would not have hesitated to cut short the Nixon misadventure by employing all her resources. "Would the prestige of the United States float if we sank the *Enterprise*?" a very senior man in the government asked me. On the other hand it was most doubtful if the USA would have launched a nuclear attack for the sake of Pakistan. After all, even after the severe lickings of the last half a decade, USA still hesitates to exploit her nuclear resources.

It seems that the unpalatable fact is that Pakistan fell a victim to Big Power politics. It would not be imprudent to suggest that the United States bargained with the Soviet Union to allow the military blockade of North Viet Nam for the concessions made for Bangladesh. In Bangladesh Soviet prestige was saved because Russia did not have to challenge the might of the United States; in North Viet Nam the American blockade was successful because America did not have to come to an open confrontation with the Soviet Union. After all, had not India proved by the unilateral cease-fire that she had no territorial ambition in West Pakistan?

So far as China was concerned, the policy of physical intervention on behalf of a friendly nation had been discarded by her after the Korean war when she found that it might prove too costly. A political humorist had quipped: "The Chinese would fight the Americans to the last Viet Nameese." Even if the analogy might not apply to Pakistan, the last two wars had proved beyond doubt that China would prefer to sit in the gallery rather than take part in a the game.

If China wanted to intervene it could have done so in the 1965 war between India and Pakistan, when the Sino-Indian conflict was fresh in its mind and the Himalayan passes were not snowbound and when the political atmosphere was more in her favour. There was no Indo-Soviet Treaty either.

In the Indo-Soviet Treaty itself there is no direct operative clause of either country getting involved in another's quarrels or battles, but the suddenness with which D.P. Dhar moved between the two capitals and finalised the agreement shows that India was determined to take this "insurance" from the Soviet Union to forestall a possible Chinese move. In inter-

national diplomacy it is good to keep others guessing. The "open" clauses in this treaty of friendship have served India well; the "hidden" (if any) clauses have served her better.

The same is perhaps true of the Indo-Bangladesh Treaty of Friendship. It will serve both the countries well for a long time. But was there any need for such a treaty? Some people have already started a whispering campaign that Bangladesh was "pressured" into accepting this treaty. They forget or do not know that the draft was under negotiation for a long time and that both parties were equally eager to formalise the existing friendship between the two countries. Bangladesh leaders, confronted as they are with numerous problems and challenges, need all the props they can get. This treaty is one such assuring them that in times of trouble they can invoke any of the few helpful clauses of the treaty and get instant Indian response. Too much importance should never be paid to such treaties—or to any treaty for that matter. Even in the worst days of Sino-Indian relations, we exchanged "highest compliments" while guns boomed across the frontiers. Nor did the military pacts of Pakistan help her any better.

Though Sheikh Mujib is the *leit-motif* in this book, his arrest at gunpoint and his subsequent release from the dungeons was stark reality. So were the problems after he assumed the office of Prime Minister. He was on the point of being shot but was saved by Bhutto. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman once told me that his death was a *fait accompli* but for Yahya's drunken forgetfulness to sign the death sentence. It was later, when Bhutto came to power, that Yahya came to him to get the order signed. Bhutto, at least on this occasion, lived up to the role of a statesman when he told Yahya bluntly that since he was a civilian President he could not be party to an ante dated order of a death sentence. To this Yahya said in despair: "This is the greatest mistake of my life."

According to the Sheikh, Bhutto behaved well, perhaps too well, and told him that his life was saved by him. Otherwise he would have bought his restless peace inside the grave dug near the prison cell. Why did Bhutto save Mujib? The answer to this can only be given by Bhutto and we doubt whether he will give it so long he is in power. Whatever may be said about

Bhutto, nobody could accuse him of being a dumb politician. He might have been a pawn in the hands of the military rulers of Pakistan, but on each occasion he surfaced to spoil the game for others while gaining advantage for himself. In the process, East Pakistan was lost, but Bhutto became the President of Pakistan nevertheless. So he argued that a dead Mujib was of no value to him. By saving him he might yet have a slender chance to retrieve the "lost world." The other way he had no chance at all.

Let us also not ignore the realities of the situation. With Mujib hanged, the fate of the military officers captured in Bangladesh would have been sealed. Bhutto was, and still is, under tremendous pressure from the armed forces to get the POWs back. If it was difficult for him to convince the military clique that Mujib's life should be spared, his argument that several heads of the captured generals might roll in return was surely convincing to the army. I was told by a very senior Pakistan Army officer, now in a POW camp in India, that many among them were related to the top military officers in Pakistan who were capable of decision-making. How could they ignore the bargaining advantage Bangladesh had through India?

During the last stage of the *Mukti Bahini* struggle there were rumours that General Yahya might strike a bargain with the Awami League by releasing Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Though the Sheikh might not have agreed to this—he need not have known before his release—some of his close friends were willing to talk. Yahya, however, did not play his cards well; but Bhutto did. A seasoned politician, he gambled even with unseen cards. He sought assurances from Mujib to have a loose federation with Pakistan and Bangladesh and requested Mujib to think over it. Mujib might have agreed to consider the proposal; but he was not aware of the developments in Bangladesh. Yahya definitely did not have his information department geared to keep him informed. Perhaps that is why the initial hesitation by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his visit to Delhi to atone for the fleeting thought of a rapprochement with Bhutto. It is also a fact that Bhutto was under pressure from the United States as well for releasing Mujibur Rahman; the UK and the USSR also played their role in having the release of *Bangabandhu*

few hours convinced him that, but for India, the cherished freedom would be far away; indeed, he would not have lived to see it at all.

Actually his release was too good to be true. Begum Mujib, talking to her husband in London on the telephone could only sob and splutter: "Don't talk to anyone... you remember what happened to you... you remember Agartala [Agartala Conspiracy case]... don't talk... come home." Her primal womanly instinct told her that her husband might say something indiscreet and be imprisoned again. For her, Mujib's freedom was still unreal. There were millions of others who were equally dazed. Mujib was dazed too. Nazrul Islam, the acting President, told him from Dacca that they were "really free." Mujib, who at one time had to bargain hard for his six points, and even at the time of his arrest there was little hope that the six points could ever be achieved, now had everything to himself; no Agartala Conspiracy Case, no threat, no exploitation—and all for his people! Naturally he was dazed too.

But he did not lose his head, no more than he did when he was arrested by the army on the night of 25 March 1971. He had his bags packed then, apparently ready for the prison. Some Western correspondents interpreted that he was ready for going underground. But Mujib knew best. He knew that if he went underground, the Pakistan Army would search and destroy every house in Bangladesh. Mujib did not know that the Pakistan Army would have done that in any case, or branding him as an "Indian fifth column" would have tried him in absentia. So Mujib had only time to pick up his pipe. Referring to this incident he told me: "I asked the army officer to wait and went to bring my pipe," he added with obvious pride. "No one can separate Mujibur Rahman from his pipe."

One thing was certain, whatever might have been the thoughts in his mind at the time of his arrest: he was not afraid. Pakistani soldiers were itching to get a pot shot at him and when they surrounded his house a Pakistani Colonel was heard barking his command to his men: "Don't shoot him, the General wants him alive." The more hot headed ones in the army who were less concerned with the political aspects of a military campaign were not happy. During my talks with the POWs at Dacca

Golf Course in front of Niazi's headquarters, a Pakistani Major hissed: "I would have given my job to get a shot at that bastard." To him Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the infidel, the wrecker of Pakistan and an Indian stooge. He was silenced by an Indian officer. So, in spite of his apparent safety in military custody there could have been "an accident" during the arrest; a bullet hitting him when a soldier was "adjusting" his gun. And the matter would have been hushed up and the world might not have known ever what had happened to him. To me it seems that Yahya wanted to keep him alive for bargaining but in the process he had to bargain for something he never thought of.

After his release at London, one of the first things that Mujib did was to speak to the world. He prepared a statement and read it out to the Press in his hotel lounge. When an enterprising News Editor of a Calcutta newspaper rang him up in London, all he talked about was the Press statement he had made. He was also told that Mujib would stop at New Delhi *en route* to Bangladesh.

This was a fine gesture that he made and it was not an *ad hoc* decision. He wanted the whole world to know that he was grateful to India. He must have assessed the great burden that India took upon herself, the grave risk involved and the sacrifice that was made. He knew that he could never repay India—there was no need for that—he could only make a gesture at that moment and he did it without any qualms. He halted at Delhi.

There was another reason. Bhutto had at least two meetings with him before he was released. In these meetings (and through emissaries like A.K. Brohi), Bhutto was trying to get an understanding from the Sheikh that he would at least try to retain the integrity of Pakistan, at least in name if not in substance. But the Sheikh did not make any such commitment. His only reply was: "If you release me you will have to do it unconditionally." He had another reply in store for Bhutto. That was given during his short stopover in Delhi. Arriving in Delhi he let the whole world know that India was Mujib's friend and was the friend of Bangladesh. No matter who called him a stooge, as far as he was concerned, friendship with India was permanent.



As he explained in his first public meeting in Delhi, the friendship and amity between Bangladesh and India—and between Mrs Gandhi and himself—was based on principles dear to both of them. The four historic principles enunciated by him were nationalism, secularism, democracy and socialism. In other words Sheikh Mujib was notifying the world that his country had permanently severed relations with Pakistan, and in future Bangladesh would follow the role of a progressive democratic country where theocracy could not thrive.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was known as a man of decision and courage. He was not a good public speaker at the beginning of his political career but with his maturity he became one of the top speakers in the then Pakistan and could sway the masses at will. He could make them do whatever he liked and that was proved many times before the Bangladesh struggle started. But it is a matter of record that though Sheikh Mujibur Rahman speaks extempore at public meetings, he does make rehearsed speeches on important occasions. As a matter of fact, all the way from Delhi to Dacca, Sheikh Mujib loudly rehearsed the speech he was to make on arrival at Dacca, including his pathetic reference to his physical weaknesses. The Delhi speech was also well thought out and well planned. It went slightly off key because Mujib had mentally prepared it in English but the Delhi crowd threw him off his balance by requesting him to speak in Bengali. The request overwhelmed him as he heard thousands demanding to hear him speak in the language for which he had fought throughout his life; it put him off balance even more because the request came from people whose mother tongue was not Bengali.

Earlier he had received a jolt as he deplaned from the Royal Air Force Comet and the band struck: *Amar Sonar Bangla. Ani Tomai Bhalobashi*. Mujib visibly paled at this and said in a whisper: "Oh! Have you made this our National Anthem? I was thinking of selecting *Dhanadhanya Pushpe Bhara* [a popular song by D.L. Roy]."

So the *Bajrakantha* (the voice of thunder) roared again; this time at Delhi, not at the Ramna Race Course. And the millions who tuned in their wireless sets heard the Sheikh speaking in person; he was real, he was alive! A wave of

jubilant passed through two nations. And the Sheikh and Mrs Gandhi met for the first time and talked like long-lost friends; both belonging to the same age group and tempered equally like steel through the hard school of politics. Many were anxious to know what transpired at this meeting but it is a fact that between sips of coffee, only pleasantries were exchanged; passing reference was made to Pakistan and Bhutto's politics. And Mujib invited Mrs Indira Gandhi to Dacca. Accepting the invitation she suggested that they should have a fuller and more meaningful meeting soon after the Sheikh had come to grips with the problems (this meeting took place in Calcutta and later Mrs Gandhi visited Dacca). The Sheikh's Press statement in London and his public speech in Delhi had cleared many things that India wanted to know. Though he was emotional and excited at that time, eager to meet his people and his family, he was positive about what he was saying and the people seemed convinced that the Sheikh was sincere enough.

A few months have passed since Sheikh Mujibur Rahman took over the responsibility of running the affairs of his devastated country. His style and stance have evoked different reactions in different men, in different countries. His policies and his hesitation had disillusioned some and encouraged others. The charisma is wearing off as problems are raising their ugly heads. Can Mujib handle them alone and in style?

As for India, many people are disappointed that the honeymoon would be over so soon. There could, however, be no escape from hard realities. People who had earned their freedom at such cost would not naturally tolerate even a suggestion that they were not completely free. They assert their right to freedom, and often in too assertive a manner. That explains why the political leadership, against their better judgment, decided to bid farewell to the Indian Army, though a contingent had to go again for operations against the Mizo and other rebels in the Chittagong hill tracts.

What is glibly referred to as the anti-Indian feeling is nothing but ill-informed criticism of an equally sensitive mind; at best, it is the manifestation of the people's desire to assert that they were completely free. No doubt it hurts when some people in Bangladesh, who had not a jot of sacrifice to their credit, talk

about Indian expansionism and colonialism. If India had any such desire, she would have done something about it long ago. It is India's insistence on State trading between the two countries that has kept the dreaded "marwari capital" from making inroads into Bangladesh.

On our side, we are yet to mature in international politics. When we expect the people of Bangladesh to speak of their debts to India with reverence and awe, we forget that we blame the Americans for expecting us to be grateful to the USA for its aid and we should not like other friends to remind us that we should be eternally beholden. We always maintain that "strings" should not be attached to foreign aid. At the same time we forget that the promise of permanent gratitude from any country is like a rope around its neck. Bangladesh will like or hate us depending on our attitude and what we do; never for what we did. What we did is past and in international politics there is nothing called gratitude or friendship where any country's interest is affected. If the Sheikh feels that he should benefit by befriending India's enemies, it is for him to decide.

We had been comrades in arms and we should try to be comrades in peace too. We staked a lot on Bangladesh and Bangladesh too has a greater stake here. How we conduct ourselves will determine the future of the two nations and their relationship. In spite of our unhappy experience with the Panch Sheel (five principles of peace), Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's simple but direct "four principles" could be the best guarantee for peace and prosperity in the two countries. There may be small pin-pricks but they should be taken as a new nation's ignorance. At the end of the farewell ceremony at the Race Course, when the Indian Army was formally withdrawn, General Aurora, GOC-in-C, Eastern Command and the Commander of the Allied Army in Bangladesh, arrived at Dacca airport to board his plane. But nobody was there to escort him to the aircraft. Nobody came to see him off. When his attention was drawn to this lapse in "courtesy," General Aurora laughed and said: "How do you expect them to perfect their protocol in three months? Nobody should mind these things."

Nobody should. But some people do. When Sheikh Mujibur Rahman came to Calcutta, some pressmen and officials from

Bangladesh complained openly that they should have been kept at the Raj Bhavan instead of the Great Eastern Hotel, which according to them was not the "right standard." Of course, they had every right to be bitter when they were invited by the Government of India as its guests. One of them, a pressman turned Information Officer told me openly: "We were even better treated than this by the Pakistan Government." My answer was equally simple as a pressman: "Pakistan arranged junkets for you in West Pakistan because she expected you to write favourably, not that you could do anything else, but we have invited you as a good gesture to cover the visit of your Prime Minister, for which you should have come on your own." But there were other journalists in the same group who did their work without any complaints and were even happy that they had the teleprinter facilities for sending news from inside the hotel. These are small matters and small men always quarrel. But at the top there is perfect amity.

That does not mean that the problems and frictions would not be there. Hundreds of Indian railway wagons carrying foodgrains from India to Bangladesh are held up unduly long thus affecting further movement; jute trading between Bangladesh and other countries are often frowned upon by the Indian business community; substandard goods smuggled from India into Bangladesh or spurious "Indian" cosmetics manufactured in Bangladesh earn a bad name for India. An article in an Indian newspaper suggesting the annulment of "partition" was thought by many Bangladesh people as an affront and a "sinister" and "motivated" campaign by India, forgetting again that India happens to be a democratic country and the government exerts very little control over the Press, unlike the tradition created by the martial law authorities for over a decade in the then Pakistan. Complaints that the Indian Army had denuded Bangladesh factories and had taken with them all valuables can be heard even in posh drawing rooms, and when prices soar, India is blamed squarely for it, suggesting that the border smuggling is responsible for this. Even before a single kilogram of fish came to India from Bangladesh, rumours were spread that the fish prices had gone up because of export to India. These are just signs of immaturity and such talk is

heard on both sides of the border. The demonstration against D.P. Dhar who alone did more for Bangladesh than any other person besides the Prime Minister, is also a manifestation of the same signs of immaturity. As far as Dhar was concerned, he was "tickled" that he had earned such notoriety so soon. That is maturity.

At the same time, those in India who find the seed of anti-India campaigns in this often forget that Bangladesh is a democracy now and the demonstrations are not sponsored by the government as in military regimes, and demonstrations by a handful need not necessarily be taken as the verdict of all the people. Do not similar things happen in India too? It is the democratic right of the people of Bangladesh to find fault with India and demonstrate if they think it fit. There is no reason why Bangladesh should give India the "big brother" status. Why should we expect it either? Bangladesh is a democracy; so is India. And this common factor can bring the two nations closer.

There are also cross currents and business interests in both the countries. It is a fact that the Indian business community did not like the Government of India's policy of State trading in Bangladesh. Similarly, the business community in Bangladesh thought that after a fall in the business and industrial activities during the disturbances, they would be able to make hay after peace was restored. There was also a group who felt that after the withdrawal of *paschima* (West Pakistani) capital, they would be the new industrial elite in Bangladesh, earning huge profits. They forgot too that Mujibur Rahman got his mandate from the common people, not from the business community of Bangladesh or the industrialists.

The forces of disruption and extremism are there. It is not unlikely that giving recognition to Bangladesh, Pakistan and her new leader, Bhutto, will try to help the forces of extremism and fanaticism like the Muslim League, the Al Badr, the Al Shamis and a host of others to raise their ugly heads and even win the elections. There are other forces from outside who might also work for the same goal. In that case history will repeat itself; the only difference this time will be that it will start a civil war between the forces of extremism and the forces

of secularism. This will have to be guarded against.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is aware of this. Otherwise he would not have gone to inaugurate the party meeting of the National Awami Party. The feeling is there that a coalition is in the offing to create a bulwark against the forces of extremism by collaboration among the progressive forces. Obviously, Mujib means it. Otherwise the Sheikh would not have gone there. Does Prime Minister Indira Gandhi go to inaugurate the party meeting of the CPI(M)? Neither would they ask her to do so.

A loose confederation between India, Bangladesh and Pakistan may be a solution but that will take time. Bhutto had shown his desire to come to Simla and, to give his visit a colour of informality, brought his daughter, Miss Benazir, with him. Bangladesh did not participate in the meeting but made it clear that it had no interest in Kashmir. On the trial of war criminals it asserted itself. During the laboured progress of the talks, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman accused Bhutto at a public meeting in Kushtia for going back on his words. To Bangladesh as well as to India, Bhutto's feeble voice for "self-determination" of the people of Kashmir did not cut any ice. Was it not Bhutto who refused to allow the people of Bangladesh even to share the responsibility of administration, let alone have their self-determination?

When the Simla talks almost reached a deadlock, a friend in the External Affairs Ministry of India told me: "Don't worry, the PM got whatever she wanted badly; she will find a solution." Within 24 hours he proved to be prophetic, whether by his inner knowledge of the workings of the administration, or by intelligent analysis, I shall never know. But the after-dinner meeting between the two leaders produced tangible results. It was not much but something which could be a basis for further talks.

Three cardinal points emerged out of the agreement signed by Bhutto and Mrs Gandhi and in all these, India got what she was trying to achieve:

- (i) Pakistan had to renounce force.
- (ii) Third party mediation was ruled out in cases of major differences thus minimising the possibility of Big Power

politics in the subcontinent.

(iii) Pakistan had to accept the principles of Panch Sheel.

The military and strategic gains are also important. India did not have to concede a single inch of land across the international boundary, the issue of the POWs, which was Bhutto's top priority in the negotiations did not find place in the agreement which meant that the stand of Bangladesh and India prevailed. Finally, in Kashmir, India retained her considerable strategic advantages that she had gained till 17 December 1971.

Politically, it might have been suicidal for any other leader but Bhutto. The military clique, still wielding the big stick would have to bear with him, at least for some time, if they really wanted the POWs back. And they sure want them badly.

On the credit side for Bhutto is the agreement—the treaty. So long as he can talk and produce something, however little that may be, he has got an insurance against a coup. It was a wonderful document of international living; Mrs Gandhi kept her bargain and Bhutto got a treaty to show his countrymen that he really did try hard. The major achievement is the thaw in the relations between the two nations. Not that it meant much; we had the Nehru-Liaquat Pact and the Nehru-Noon Agreement and that did not improve the situation any. But the circumstances are different this time. So is the international atmosphere. The clauses on restoring communication between the two countries were a major step, since better communications mean better understanding. Mere wishes of good neighbourly relations, expressed by the Heads of States do not bring lasting peace, neither do any signed documents unless they have popular sanction and are in the mutual interests of the nations. Though Bhutto may not be personally convinced, his is an unenviable position. Malicious propaganda for the last 25 years, the indoctrination of the people and the bogey of self-determination for the people of Kashmir ultimately became a noose round Bhutto's neck. It may take some doing to get out of it and that may not be very soon. He has won the first round (not against India but against his own people) by boldly resolving "to put an end to the conflict and confrontation," and he might win the second round by accepting the division of Kashmir by agreeing to the

present line of occupation as the international border. The peace offensive is on.

In the Indo-Bangladesh context, Bangladesh is a new nation. And it will not automatically give India the "big brother" status. Both the States are based on identical principles of democracy, secularism and socialism. That automatically brings the two nations nearer. The relationship between the two countries should be correct, formal and understanding. The price of liberty is eternal vigilance and as a new nation Bangladesh will have to be vigilant. For India, the people should know that friendship has also a price. The ships of State running parallel are in no danger of collision. Mrs Gandhi knows it and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman knows it even better.

They are, however, not immortals nor are they indestructible, nor even infallible.



## Appendix 1

For the last 24 years the Pakistan Government, manned mostly by West Pakistanis, dominated the state policy aiming to develop the barren deserts of West Pakistan by a deliberate policy which impoverished East Pakistan. Cleverly enough, the Pakistan Government tried its best not to reveal the figures separately to show the gross disparity. Nevertheless, from available figures, mostly official, the truth could not be kept concealed.

Average Annual Budget			
Total Revenue	Rs 6,000 million	<i>W.P.</i>	<i>E.P.</i>
Expenditure on Defence	60%	50%	10%
Civil Expenditure	40%	25%	15%

While E.P. provides 60 per cent of the total revenue, it receives only about 25 per cent for its expenditure and West Pakistan providing 40 per cent to the Central Exchequer receives 75 per cent of the remainder.

### Foreign Trade and Exchange Earnings

	<i>West Pakistan</i>		<i>East Pakistan</i>	
	Export (in pounds sterling)	Import	Export (in pounds sterling)	Import
1958-68	820 m	2,315 m	1,153 m	1,000 m
	41%	70%	52%	30%

In foreign trade East Pakistan exports constituted 59 per cent of the total but imports only 30 per cent of the imports which consisted of consumer goods and food. Very little was left for development projects. During the same period West Pakistan earned 41 per cent of the total foreign exchange and was allowed

70 per cent of the foreign exchange earnings. A major portion of this was spent on various development projects in West Pakistan.

#### Inter Zonal Trade.

1964-1969	Exports from West to East Pakistan: Rs 5,292 million	Exports from East to West Pakistan: Rs 3,174 million
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This is an example of continuous drain of East Pakistani capital to West Pakistan. It has been estimated that total transfer of resources from East Pakistan to West Pakistan since 1947 has been 3,000 million pound sterling. Let us look at typical export items for the year 1964-65:

Jute and jute products (all from East Pakistan)	Rs 124,580 m
Cotton and cotton manufactures (many from W.P.)	Rs 51,880 m
Hides and skins (mainly from East Pakistan)	Rs 6,130 m
Tea (all from East Pakistan)	Rs 1,000 m
Wool (all from West Pakistan)	Rs 7,300 m
Others (East and West together)	Rs 56,200 m

#### Percentage of Allocation of Funds for Development Projects

Items	West Pakistan	East Pakistan
Foreign Exchange for various developments	80%	20%
Foreign Aid (excluding U.S. Aid)	96%	4%
U.S. Aid	66%	34%
Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation	58%	42%
Pakistan Industrial Credit & Investment Corporation	80%	20%
Industrial Development Bank	76%	24%
House Building	88%	12%
	77%	23%

The above figures are clearly indicative of the tremendous industrial growth in West Pakistan which received 77 per cent of the total development expenditure for its 40 per cent of the total population.

#### Foreign Aid to Pakistan

Chinese loan to Pakistan of \$60 million in 1965 was mostly spent in West Pakistan, much of it on a heavy machinery complex

which cost \$9 million while only \$125,000 were spent on East Pakistan water and power development. This loan is to be repaid by exporting jute and jute products.

World Bank credits were \$14 million in 1954 and \$15 million in 1965 for the Sui Gas project in West Pakistan. The same source supplied \$17 million in 1964 for Karachi port development and \$30 million to Pakistan Investment and Credit Corporation to finance mostly projects in West Pakistan. The International Development Association (UN Agency) gave a credit of \$8.5 million to West Pakistan and \$4.5 million to East Pakistan in 1964 for educational projects.

Russian aid of \$11 million to \$18 million was given to West Pakistan in 1965 for oil prospecting.

UK loans during the period 1947-1965 amounted to \$64 million and were spent mostly in West Pakistan.

Of the total US aid of \$3.6 billion \$2.7 billion were spent on Mangla and Tarbela dams in West Pakistan and only \$0.8 billion for control of floods in East Pakistan. These loans no doubt converted the barren lands of West Pakistan into fertile ones but very little was done to tackle effectively the flood problem of East Pakistan—the most fertile land in the world. The people of East Pakistan had been allowed to suffer from recurring cyclones and flood disasters since 1953.

#### Comparative Industrial Development

	<i>West Pakistan</i>		<i>East Pakistan</i>	
	1947-48	1966-67	1947-48	1966-67
Established Industries in both wings				
Cotton textile production in million yards	350	6,836	508	550
	1,853% increase		8.26% increase	
Sugar production in '000 tons	10	304	25	112
	2,940% increase		348% increase	
Cement production '000 tons	305	1,934	46	75
	534% increase		63% increase	

The above tables show how the established industries in East Pakistan had been allowed to grow extremely slowly in comparison with the extremely fast growing industries in the West. With the influx of capitalists from Bombay the picture began to change rapidly.

In the field of new industries, the percentage of investments in West and East Pakistan was roughly 75 per cent and 25 per cent respectively. Moreover, East Pakistani industries were mainly owned and controlled by the West Pakistanis whose main interest was to transfer the profits to West Pakistan instead of helping East Pakistanis' prosperity. It has been calculated that since 1947 the transfer of resources from East to West has been to the tune of £3,000 million. There was no State control over private investment and as such the flow had been completely unchecked. Steel, the basic item required for any development, was being produced in two mills in West and East Pakistan. Funds provided for these mills were £56 million for West Pakistan and £11 million for East Pakistan.

	Agricultural Development			
	West Pakistan		East Pakistan	
Fertiliser distribution during 1964-68, in '000 nutrient tons	739	66%	371	33%
Improved seed distribution during 1964-69, in '000 tons	342	89%	40	11%
	1951-52	1966-67	1951-52	1966-67
Increase in fish production in '000 metric tons	56	153	175	259
	273% increase		48% increase	
Distribution of tractors, wheel type (numbers)	20,069		1,825	

Needless to mention that agricultural land in East Pakistan has more acreage and most lands produce two to three crops a year, whereas in the West the acreage is less and the productivity per acre is much smaller. One fails to understand the logic of this state of affairs.

In agricultural finance, the Pakistan Agricultural Development Bank had lent over Rs 600 million, but most of this went to West Pakistani farmers. Most of the large irrigation projects have been treated as federal projects and were financed by the Central Government and have been completed in West Pakistan. This was a deliberate attempt to keep the 75 million Bengalis at starvation level. In the federal army of 500,000 only 20,000 were Bengalis. Those 480,000 West Pakistanis spent their income in the West which indirectly helped the economy of that part of the country. Economic experts have evidence that in 1959

an average East Pakistani was 20 per cent worse off than his counterpart in the West. In 1968, he was 40 per cent worse off than his brother in Islam in West Pakistan.

### Power Development

Another criterion to measure progress is the consumption of electric power per head of population. In Pakistan, growth in power production has been considerable. West Pakistan generates by hydel, thermal and other means a total of 838,000 KW (83 per cent of the total) whereas East Pakistan generates 179,500 KW (17 per cent of the total). A great share of foreign aid has been spent on various power development projects. Two giant irrigation and power development projects in the Indus Basin cost \$1,800 million and WAPDA spent Rs 1,453 million between 1959-64.

<i>Area</i>	<b>Education</b>			
	<i>West Pakistan</i>		<i>East Pakistan</i>	
Primary Schools	1947-48	1968-69	1947-48	1968-69
	8,413	39,418	29,663	28,308
	Number increase		Number decreases in	
	4.5 times		spite of increased children	
Secondary Schools	1947-48	1965-66	1947-48	1965-66
	2,598	4,472	3,481	3,964
	72% increase		13% increase	
Colleges—various Types	1947-48	1968-69	1947-48	1968-69
	40	271	50	162
	675% increase		320% increase	
Medical/Engineering/Agricultural Colleges	4	17	3	9
Universities	425% increase		300% increase	
	2	6	1	4
	(654	(18,708	(1,620	(8,831
	scholars) scholars)		scholars) scholars)	
Increase in scholars	30 times		5 times	

It is interesting to note that although the school-going population increased in East Pakistan the number of schools decreased through a deliberate policy of neglect, whereas during the same period the Pakistan Government spent vast sums of money and increased the number of schools in West Pakistan by 4.5

times. Was not that a systematic plan for giving the West Pakistani children a better academic start so that their future careers were firmly assured? The natural result was the vast increase in the number of colleges and universities of all kinds.

This is clear evidence of government policy aiming at keeping the East Pakistani children intellectually inferior by not providing the facilities they deserved. The end product that we see is in the number of university scholars. In East Pakistan, which had double the number of scholars in 1947, the number only increased by five times in 20 years and in West Pakistan the corresponding increase was 30 times. In the field of research and development, centres established for agricultural, medical, scientific and industrial research, 13 out of 16 are located in West Pakistan. As far as scholarships and training grants for studies abroad under the Colombo Plan, Ford Foundation, Commonwealth Aid and many others go the bulk of these went to West Pakistanis. Some of these were not even advertised in the East Pakistani Press.

In case of employment, the repetition of the same injustice towards East Pakistan is evident. Headquarters of the Army, Navy, Air Force and all Central Government services as well as those of private employers of all kind are located in West Pakistan. Most of the vacancies were either not advertised in East Pakistan or the practical difficulty of being interviewed was present. Moreover, various recruitment boards consisting mostly of West Pakistanis were not so well disposed to accepting East Pakistanis. In the armed forces, by making the physical standard far too high for an average Bengali, the system of eliminating Bengali candidates was very easy and successful. The following figures show some examples of disparity in this field.

	<i>West Pakistan</i>	<i>East Pakistan</i>
Central Civil Service	84%	16%
Foreign Service	85%	15%
Foreign Head of Missions (numbers)	60	9
Army	95%	5%
Army: Officers of General rank (numbers)	16	1
Navy—technical	81%	19%
Navy—non technical	91%	9%

	<i>West Pakistan</i>	<i>East Pakistan</i>
Air Force pilots	89%	11%
Armed Forces (numbers)	500,000	20,000
Pakistan Airlines „	7,000	280
PIA Directors „	9	1
PIA Area Managers (numbers)	5	nil
Railway Board Directors	7	1

### Social Welfare

In the field of social welfare, the same pattern is reflected. Let us look at some of the statistics comparing the two wings.

	<i>West Pakistan</i>	<i>East Pakistan</i>
Population	55 million	75 million
Total number of doctors	12,400	7,600
Total number of hospital beds	26,000	6,000
Rural Health Centres	325	88
Urban Community Development Centres	81	52

East Pakistan has been described as one of the poorest countries in the world. Even the economists, impartial and foreign, admitted that. How does the average East Pakistani compare with his compatriot in West Pakistan?

	<i>West Pakistan</i>		<i>East Pakistan</i>	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Employment of civil labour force	59%	41%	86%	14%

In West Pakistan the industrial development provided 41 per cent of the total labour force employment and a better standard of life. In East Pakistan, the poor development in the industrial sphere made only 14 per cent of the total employment available in the cities. The result is reflected in the figures for per capita income and gross domestic product.

	<i>West Pakistan</i>		<i>East Pakistan</i>	
	1960	1970	1960	1970
Per capita income in Pakistani rupees	355	492	269	308

The difference in per capita income between East and West Pakistan was 86 in 1960. Ten years later the difference soared to 184. In other words while the standard of living had been increasing in the West it had been declining in East Pakistan.

Staple food of East Pakistan is rice and of West Pakistan wheat. In West Pakistan the price of rice per maund (812 lbs.) was Rs 18 and in East Pakistan Rs 50. In West Pakistan the price of wheat was Rs 10 per maund while in the East it was Rs 35.

How could one expect a better health standard when the East Pakistani has to pay a far higher price for his food while his income is far below that of his compatriot in the West? The picture becomes clearer when we compare the average calorie intake in rural areas. Between 1960-65 the calorie intake per day in rural areas was 1,625 in West Pakistan as compared to 1,556 in East Pakistan. In the urban areas the disparity is even greater. (Calorie intake in the UK is 3,250).



## Appendix II

Under the Military Assistance Programme, the United States undertook to equip and train a force of up to six divisions of the Pakistani Army with modern equipment. It supplied mainly modern infantry weapons, including semi-automatic rifles, carbines, light and medium machine-guns, infantry mortars, recoilless rifles of 57 and 106 mm calibre and 105 mm and 155 mm howitzers. Also included were 300 Armoured Personnel Carriers, 200 Sherman, 250 Chaffee, about 100 M-41 Bulldog and 460 M-47/M-48 Patton tanks.

A full complement of engineering, transport and signals equipment along with ammunition, including sophisticated Variable Time Electronic Fuses, to fight a two-month war was also gifted.

### Air Force

- 10 Lockheed T-33A Trainers
- 7 Lockheed RT-33A Reconnaissance-Trainers
- 120 F-86 Sabrejet Fighter-Bombers
- 26 Martin Canberra B-57B Bombers
- 6 Martin Canberra RB-57 Bombers
- 15 Sikorsky S-55 Hunters
- 4 Grumman HU-16A Albatross Maritime Reconnaissance craft
- 12 Lockheed F-104A Starfighters
- 2 Lockheed F-10B Starfighters
- 6 Lockheed C-130E Hercules Transports
- 4 Kaman HH-43B Huskie Hunters
- 25 Cessna T-37B Jet Trainers

## Navy

- 7 Coastal Minesweepers
- 1 Tug
- 4 Battle Class Destroyers
- 2 CV Class Destroyers
- 2 CH Class Destroyers

Of these, the first three items were directly supplied by the United States. The rest were refitted under the Military Assistance Programme. The two CH class destroyers were initially purchased by the United States for Pakistan. One water carrier, two tugs and one oiler were purchased from Italy under the programme and transferred to Pakistan. One submarine—Trench class *PNS GHAZI* (now sunk)—was loaned to Pakistan. Recently an unspecified number of riverboats and coasters was supplied to Pakistan by the USA.

In addition, all the air bases in Pakistan—Mauripur, Samungli, Drigh Road, Peshawar, Kohat, Risalpur, Lahore, Sargodha, Multan, Chaklala, Nawabshah, Gilgit, Chitral, Malir and Miranshah—were built up by NATO standards under the US Military Assistance Programme. Early-warning surveillance radars facing India were installed under this programme at Badin, Multan, Sargodha and Peshawar. A microwave communication network was also developed under the CENTO based programme.

US military assistance to Pakistan amounted to \$730 million in supply of hardware and another \$565 million in defence support assistance for the maintenance of the armed forces. Besides, the United States also undertook to train personnel of the Pakistani armed forces.

China also supplied military equipment to Pakistan. For the army this included infantry and artillery equipment for two divisions (AK 47 rifles, light and medium machine-guns, 60 mm, 81 mm mortars, 120 mm mortars 100 mm field guns) and 225 T-59 medium tanks. For the air force China gave Pakistan one squadron of IL-28 Bombers and four squadrons of MIG-19 Interceptors. In terms of naval equipment China is believed to have supplied Pakistan an unspecified number of riverboats

and coasters since March 1971.

In addition the Chinese have assisted Pakistan in setting up the two major ordnance factories in Pakistan: one at Joydebpur, the other in Taxila.

Pakistan has recently revealed that all these supplies were free of cost.

The United Kingdom gave four patrol boats to Pakistan. West Germany passed on 90 F-86 jets through Iran along with Cobra anti-tank missiles. France's contribution was five Allouette helicopters, 24 Mirage-III fighters and three Daphne class submarines while Iran gave four Lockheed C-130E Hercules transport planes and Italy eight Midget submarines and eight Chariot two-man submarines.

The USSR contribution was more substantial and included an unknown number of MI 8 helicopters, 200 130 mm guns, 150 T-55 tanks, mobile radar sets and spares for MIG-19.

While the above transactions are by and large confirmed, the following transactions are not confirmed but are plausible. Pakistan received 100 Patton tanks from West European sources. Another quantity of Patton tanks from Iran and Turkey, and up to 50 more F-86 Sabrejets from Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Ammunition, aircraft spares, communication and other equipment came from the United States, West Europe and China (quantities not ascertainable).

## Appendix III

*President Ayub Khan's letter to General Yahya Khan dated 24 March 1969 handing over power to the latter.*

On 24 March 1969 Ayub Khan went back on his words. He called upon General Yahya Khan, the Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Armed Forces illegally and unconstitutionally to take over power and authority of the government. The 1962 constitution then in force, did not authorise President Ayub to transfer power to the armed forces. He committed this act of betrayal by simply writing a personal letter to General Yahya Khan saying that he had made up his mind to transfer power to him on the ground that constitutional authority and civil administration had broken down in the country. This claim was totally baseless. Ayub wrote:

My dear General Yahya,

It is with profound regret that I have come to the conclusion that all Civil Administration and Constitutional authority in the country has become ineffective. If the situation continues to deteriorate at the present alarming rate, all economic life, indeed, civilized existence will become impossible.

I am left with no option but to step aside and leave it to the Defence Forces of Pakistan, which today represent the only effective and legal instrument, to take over full control of the affairs of this country. They are by the grace of God in a position to retrieve the situation and to save the country from utter chaos and total destruction. They alone can restore sanity and put the country back on the road to progress in a civil and constitutional manner.

The restoration and maintenance of full democracy according to the fundamental principles of our faith and the needs of our people must remain our ultimate goal. In that lies the salvation of our people who are blessed with the highest qualities of dedication and vision and who are destined to play a glorious role in the world.

It is most tragic that while we were well on our way to [a] happy and prosperous future, we were plunged into an abyss of senseless agitation. Whatever name may have been used to glorify it, time will show that this turmoil was deliberately created by well tutored and well-backed elements. They made it impossible for the Government to maintain any semblance of law and order or to protect the civil liberties, life and property of the people. Every single instrument of administration and every medium of expression of saner public opinion was subjected to inhuman pressure. Dedicated but defenseless Government functionaries were subjected to ruthless public criticism or blackmail. The result is that all social and ethical norms have been destroyed and instruments of Government have become in-operative [*sic*] and ineffective.

The economic life of the country has all but collapsed. Workers and labourers are being incited and urged to commit acts of lawlessness and brutality. While demands for higher wages, salaries and amenities are being extracted under threat of violence, production is going down. There has been serious fall in exports and I am afraid the country may soon find itself in the grip of serious inflation.

All this is the result of the reckless conduct of those who acting under the cover of a mass movement struck blow after blow at the very root of the country during the last few months. The pity is that a large number of innocent but gullible people became victims of their evil designs.

I have served my people to the best of my ability under all circumstances. Mistakes there must have been but what has been achieved and accomplished is not negligible. There are some who would like to undo all that I have done and even that which was done by the Government before me. But the most tragic and heart-rendering [*sic*] thought is that there are elements at work which would like to undo even what the Quaid-

e-Azam had done, namely the creation of Pakistan.

I have exhausted all possible civil and constitutional means to resolve the present crisis. I offered to meet all those regarded as the leaders of the people. Many of them came to Conference recently but only after I had fulfilled all their pre-conditions. Some declined to come for reasons best known to them. I asked these people to evolve an agreed formula. They failed to do so in spite of days of deliberations. They finally agreed on two points and I accepted both of them. I then offered that the unagreed issues should all be referred to the representatives of the people after they had been elected on the basis of direct adult franchise. My argument was that the delegates in the Conference who had not been elected by the people could not arrogate to themselves the authority to decide all civil and constitutional issues including those on which even they are not agreed among themselves. I thought I would call the National Assembly to consider the two agreed points but it soon became obvious that this would be an exercise in futility. The members of the Assembly are no longer free agents and there is no likelihood of the agreed two points being faithfully adopted. Indeed, members are being threatened and compelled either to boycott the session or to move such amendments as would liquidate the Central Government, make the maintenance of the armed forces impossible, divide the economy of the country and break up Pakistan into little bits and pieces. Calling the Assembly in such chaotic conditions can only aggravate the situation. How can anyone deliberate coolly and dispassionately fundamental problems under threat of instant violence?

It is beyond the capacity of the Civil Government to deal with the present complex situation and the Defence Forces must step in.

It is your legal and constitutional responsibility to defend the country not only against external aggression but also to save it from internal disorder and chaos. The nation expects you to discharge this responsibility to preserve the security and integrity of the country and to restore normal social, economic and administrative life. Let peace and happiness be brought back to this anguished land of 120 million people.

I believe you have the capacity, patriotism, dedication and

imagination to deal with the formidable problems facing the country. You are the leader of a force which enjoys the respect and admiration of the world. Your colleagues in the Pakistan Air Force and in the Pakistan Navy are men of honour and I know that you will always have their full support. Together the armed forces of Pakistan must save Pakistan from disintegration.

I should be grateful if you would convey to every soldier, sailor and airman that I shall always be proud of having been associated with them as their Supreme Commander. They must know that in this grave hour they have to act as the custodian of Pakistan. Their conduct and actions must be inspired by the principles of Islam and by the conviction that they are serving the interests of their people.

It has been a great honour to have served the valiant and inspired people of Pakistan for so long a period. May God guide them to move toward greater prosperity and glory.

I must also record my great appreciation of your unswerving loyalty. I know that patriotism has been a constant source of inspiration for you all your life. I pray for your success and for the welfare and happiness of my people.

Khuda Hafiz.

Yours sincerely,  
Sd- M.A. Khan

*For Lieutenant-General Niazi from Sam Manekshaw  
Chief of the Army Staff, India*

I have received your communication regarding a cease-fire in Bangladesh at 1430 hrs today through the American Embassy at New Delhi.

I had previously informed Gen FARMAN ALI in two messages that I would guarantee the safety of all your military and para-

military forces who surrender to me in Bangladesh. Complete protection to foreign nationals ethnic minorities and personnel of West Pakistan origin no matter why [sic] they may be. Since you have indicated your desire to stop fighting I expect you to issue orders to all forces under your command in Bangladesh to cease-fire immediately and surrender to my advancing forces wherever they are located.

I give you my solemn assurance that personnel who surrender shall be treated with the dignity and respect that soldiers are entitled to and I shall abide by the provisions of the Geneva Convention. Further as you have many wounded I shall ensure that they are well cared for and your dead given proper burial. No one need have any fear for their safety no matter where they come from. Nor shall there be any reprisals by forces operating under my command.

Immediately I receive a positive response from you I shall direct Gen AURORA the Commander of Indian and Bangladesh forces in the Eastern Theatre to refrain from all air and ground action against your forces. As a token of my good faith I have ordered that no air action shall take place over DACCA from 1700 hrs today.

I assure you I have no desire to inflict unnecessary casualties on your troops as I abhor loss of human lives. Should you however not comply with what I have stated you will leave me with no other alternative but to resume my offensive with the utmost vigour at 0900 hrs IST on Dec 16.

In order to be able to discuss and finalise all matters quickly I have arranged for a radio link on listening watch from 1700 hrs IST today Dec 15. The frequency will be 6606 KHz by day and 3216 KHz by night. Call signs will be CAL (CALCUTTA) and DAC (DACCA). I would suggest you instruct your signallers to restore micro-wave communications immediately.

### *Instrument of Surrender*

The Pakistan Eastern Command agree to surrender all Pakistan



Armed Forces in Bangladesh to Lieutenant-General JAGJIT SINGH AURORA, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Indian and Bangladesh forces in the Eastern Theatre. This surrender includes all Pakistan land, air and naval forces as also all para-military forces and civil armed forces. These forces will lay down their arms and surrender at the places where they are currently located to the nearest regular troops under the Command of Lieutenant-General Jagjit Singh Aurora.

The Pakistan Eastern Command shall come under the orders of Lieutenant-General Jagjit Singh Aurora as soon as this instrument has been signed. Disobedience of orders will be regarded as a breach of the surrender terms and will be dealt with in accordance with the accepted laws and usages of war. The decision of Lieutenant-General Jagjit Singh Aurora will be final, should any doubt arise as to the meaning or interpretation of the surrender terms.

Lieutenant-General Jagjit Singh Aurora gives a solemn assurance that personnel who surrender shall be treated with dignity and respect that soldiers are entitled to in accordance with the provisions of the GENEVA Convention and guarantees the safety and well-being of all PAKISTAN military and para-military forces who surrender. Protection will be provided to foreign nationals, ethnic minorities and personnel of West Pakistan origin by the forces under the command of Lieutenant-General Jagjit Singh Aurora.

Sd-  
(JAGJIT SINGH AURORA)

Lieutenant-General  
General Officer Commanding-  
in-Chief  
Eastern Command (INDIA)  
16 Dec. 1971

Sd/-  
(AMIR ABDULLAH KHAN  
NIAZI)

Lieutenant-General  
Martial Law Administrator  
Zone B  
and Commander Eastern  
Command (PAKISTAN)  
16 Dec. 1971

*Joint Statement by the Prime Minister of India, Mrs Gandhi, and the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Issued on 8 February 1972*

On the invitation of the Government of India, His Excellency Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, paid a visit to Calcutta from 6th to 8th February, 1972. The Prime Minister was accompanied by the Foreign Minister and by Senior officials of the Government of Bangladesh. He was received by the Prime Minister of India on arrival and by the Governor of West Bengal at Raj Bhavan.

2. During his stay the Prime Minister of Bangladesh addressed a mammoth gathering of the people of Calcutta. He expressed gratitude on behalf of the Government and people of Bangladesh to the Government and people of India, especially to the neighbouring States of West Bengal, Tripura, Meghalaya and Assam, for the hospitality and assistance given to millions of Bangladesh citizens and for the moral and material support given by the Government and people of India to the struggle for liberation. The Prime Minister of India reaffirmed that the people of India and the people of Bangladesh, having fought together in defence of human liberty, would continue to strive together to safeguard the ideals of freedom and the dignity of man.

3. The two Prime Ministers had detailed discussions covering every aspect of mutual relations between Bangladesh and India. They reviewed the tangible progress made in all spheres since their last meeting in New Delhi on 10th January. They resolved to give practical shape to the legitimate and deeply felt aspirations of the common peoples of the two countries, guided by the principles of democracy, socialism, secularism, non-alignment and opposition to racialism and colonialism in all its forms and manifestations. Towards these ends, they expressed their determination to promote in every possible way cooperation between the Governments and peoples of Bangladesh and India inspired by a vision of lasting peace, amity and good neighbourliness.

4. The Prime Minister of Bangladesh paid warm tribute to

the armed forces of India and the part they played in the liberation of Bangladesh. The task having been completed, the two Prime Ministers felt that these armed forces should be withdrawn. The withdrawal of the Indian armed forces would be completed by March 25, 1972.

5. The two Prime Ministers reviewed the entire field of international affairs. They resolved to work together in the interest of world peace and stability. They agreed that in the achievement of this objective the Governments and the peoples of the two countries would be inspired by the ideals, principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

6. The Prime Minister of Bangladesh solemnly re-affirmed his resolve to ensure by every means the return of all the refugees who had taken shelter in India since March 25, 1971, and to strive by every means to safeguard their safety, human dignity and means of livelihood. The two Prime Ministers noted with satisfaction that the refugees were returning to Bangladesh and that nearly seven million had already returned in the short space of six weeks. The Prime Minister of India assured continuance of all possible assistance to the Government of Bangladesh in the unprecedented task of resettling the refugees and displaced persons in Bangladesh. Taking note of the humanitarian contribution made by the international community, both Prime Ministers expressed hope that these efforts would be enlarged and augmented so that the vast mass of uprooted humanity is enabled to live and work.

7. The two Prime Ministers reviewed measures for the rapid evolution of mutually beneficial economic relations between the two countries. It was agreed that regular talks, consultations and visits of delegations will take place between the two countries and that appropriate machinery will be set up, where necessary, to promote close cooperation in the fields of development and trade on the basis of equality and mutual benefit so that the common people of both countries become the beneficiaries. The two Prime Ministers agreed that trade between the two countries should take place on a State-to-State basis as far as possible. It was decided that the representatives of the Bangladesh and Indian Planning Commissions should meet periodically to identify areas of mutual cooperation in the developmental proces-

ses of the two countries. The two Prime Ministers decided that some of the immediate problems concerning the trade between the two countries and, in particular, the traditional border trade should be discussed and solved as early as possible by appropriate delegations of the two countries. The two Prime Ministers agreed that effective measures should be undertaken by the two Governments forthwith to prevent smuggling across the border between the two countries.

8. It was noted with satisfaction that the steps taken by the Government of Bangladesh were resulting in the reactivation of its industry and agriculture. Assistance rendered by India was helping in restoring communications and other infrastructure ravaged by war enabling the people of Bangladesh to revive as soon as possible their normal economic life.

9. The two Prime Ministers emphasised that the geography of the region provided a natural basis for cooperation between the two countries in the development and utilisation of the resources for the benefit of the people of the region. They discussed the problem of flood control, Farakka Barrage and other problems of development of water and power resources. The Prime Ministers desired that the two governments shall engage in exchanging ideas and in identifying areas of cooperation and in setting up suitable machinery for the formulation of appropriate programmes.

10. Conscious of the urge of the two peoples to enlarge the areas of mutual cooperation, both the Prime Ministers affirmed their resolve to promote such cooperation in cultural, scientific and technological fields.

11. Both Prime Ministers noted the fact that the international community has increasingly recognised the establishment of the Sovereign independent Republic of Bangladesh and reiterated the view that only those who desire to introduce instability in the region and imperil world peace would persist in ignoring this reality. They agreed to remain in close touch to review the international situation and the dangers to peace, stability and progress in the region.

12. The Prime Minister of Bangladesh renewed the invitation extended by him to the Prime Minister of India to visit Bangladesh and was assured of the eagerness of the Prime Minister of India

to make this visit at the earliest opportunity.

*The Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Peace Signed  
Between India and Bangladesh*

Dacca, March 19, 1972

Inspired by common ideals of peace, secularism, democracy, socialism and nationalism,

Having struggled together for the realisation of those ideals and commenced ties of friendship through blood and sacrifices which led to the triumphant emergence of free, sovereign and independent Bangladesh,

Determined to maintain fraternal and good-neighbourly relations and transform their border into a border of eternal peace and friendship,

Adhering firmly to the basic tenets of non-alignment, peaceful co-existence, mutual cooperation, non-interference in internal affairs and respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty,

Determined to safeguard peace, stability and security and to promote progress of their respective countries through all possible avenues of mutual cooperation,

Determined further to expand and strengthen the existing relations of friendship between them, convinced that the further development of friendship and cooperation meets the national interests of both States as well as interests of lasting peace in Asia and the world,

Resolved to contribute to strengthening world peace and security and to make efforts to bring about a relaxation of international tension and the final elimination of vestiges of colonialism, racialism and imperialism,

Convinced that in the present day world, international problems can be solved only through cooperation and not through conflict or confrontation,

Reaffirming their determination to follow the aims and prin-

ciples of the United Nations Charter, the Republic of India, on the one hand, and the People's Republic of Bangladesh, on the other, have decided to conclude the present Treaty.

*ARTICLE 1.* The high contracting parties, inspired by the ideals for which their respective peoples struggled and made sacrifices together, solemnly declare that there shall be lasting peace and friendship between their two countries and their peoples; each side shall respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the other and refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of the other side.

*ARTICLE 2.* Being guided by their devotion of [sic] the principles of equality of all peoples and States, irrespective of race or creed, the high contracting parties condemn colonialism and racialism in all forms and manifestations and are determined to strive for their final and complete elimination.

The high contracting parties shall cooperate with other States in achieving these aims and support the just aspirations of peoples in their struggle against colonialism and racial discrimination and for their national liberation.

*ARTICLE 3.* The high contracting parties reaffirm their faith in the policy of non-alignment and peaceful co-existence as important factors for easing tension in the world, maintaining international peace and security, and strengthening national sovereignty and independence.

*ARTICLE 4.* The high contracting parties shall maintain regular contacts with each other on major international problems affecting the interests of both States, through meetings and exchanges of views at all levels.

*ARTICLE 5.* The high contracting parties shall continue to strengthen and widen their mutually advantageous and all-round cooperation in the economic, scientific and technical fields. The two countries shall develop mutual cooperation in the fields of trade, transport and communications between them on the basis of the principles of equality, mutual benefit and the most favoured nation principle.

*ARTICLE 6.* The high contracting parties further agree to make joint studies and take joint action in the field of flood control, river basin development and the development of hydro-electric power and irrigation.

*ARTICLE 7.* The high contracting parties shall promote relations in the field of art, literature, education, culture, sports and health.

*ARTICLE 8.* In accordance with the ties of friendship existing between the two countries, each of the high contracting parties solemnly declares that it shall not enter into or participate in any military alliance directed against the other party.

Each of the high contracting parties shall refrain from any aggression against the other party and shall not allow the use of its territory for committing any act that may cause military damage to, or constitute a threat to the security of the other high contracting party.

*ARTICLE 9.* Each of the high contracting parties shall refrain from giving any assistance to any third party taking part in an armed conflict against the other party. In case either party is attacked or threatened with attack, the high contracting parties shall immediately enter into mutual consultations in order to take appropriate effective measures to eliminate the threat and thus ensure the peace and security of their countries.

*ARTICLE 10.* Each of the high contracting parties solemnly declares that it shall not undertake any commitment, secret or open, towards one or more States which may be incompatible with the present Treaty.

*ARTICLE 11.* The present Treaty is signed for a term of twenty-five years and shall be subject to renewal by mutual agreement of the high contracting parties.

The Treaty shall come into force with immediate effect from the date of its signature.

*ARTICLE 12.* The differences in interpreting any article or articles of the present Treaty that may arise between the high contracting parties shall be settled on a bilateral basis by peaceful means in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding.

*DONE IN DACCA ON THE NINETEENTH DAY OF MARCH  
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-TWO*

Sd/- (Smt) Indira Gandhi  
Prime Minister  
for the Republic of India

Sd/- Sheikh Mujibur Rahman  
Prime Minister  
for the People's Republic of  
Bangladesh

*The Agreement on Bilateral Relations Between  
India and Pakistan*

Simla, July 3, 1972

Following is the text of the Agreement on bilateral relations between the Government of India and the Government of Pakistan signed here today.

1. The Government of India and the Government of Pakistan are resolved that the two countries put an end to the conflict and confrontation that have hitherto marred the relations and the work for the promotion of a friendly and harmonious relationship and the establishment of durable peace in the sub-continent, so that both countries may henceforth devote their resources and energies to the pressing task of advancing the welfare of their peoples.

In order to achieve this objective, the Government of India and the Government of Pakistan have agreed as follows:

(1) That the principles and the purposes of the Charter of United Nations shall govern the relations between the two countries.

(2) That the two countries are resolved to settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations or by any other peaceful means mutually agreed upon between them. Pending the final settlement of any of the problems between the two countries, neither side shall unilaterally alter the situation and both shall prevent the organisation, assistance or encouragement of any acts detrimental to the maintenance of peaceful and harmonious relations.

(3) That the pre-requisite for reconciliation, good neighbourliness and durable peace between them is a commitment by both the countries to peaceful co-existence, respect of each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty and non-interference in each other's internal affairs, on the basis of equality and mutual benefit.

(4) That the basic issues and causes of conflict which have bedevilled the relations between the two countries for the last twentyfive years shall be resolved by peaceful means.



(5) That they shall always respect each other's national unity, territorial integrity, political independence and sovereign equality.

(6) That in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, they will refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of each other.

(7) Both Governments will take all steps within their power to prevent hostile propaganda directed against each other. Both countries will encourage the dissemination of such information as would promote the development of friendly relations between them.

(8) In order progressively to restore and normalise relations between the two countries step by step, it was agreed that:

(i) Steps shall be taken to resume communications—postal, telegraphic, sea, land including border posts and airlinks including over-flights.

(ii) Appropriate steps shall be taken to promote travel facilities for the nationals of the other country.

(iii) Trade and cooperation in economic and agreed fields will be resumed as far as possible.

(iv) Exchange in the fields of science and culture will be promoted. In this connection, delegations from the two countries will meet from time to time to work out the necessary details.

(9) In order to initiate the process of the establishment of durable peace, both the Governments agreed that:

(i) Indian and Pakistani forces shall be withdrawn to their side of the international border.

(ii) In Jammu and Kashmir the line of control resulting from the cease-fire of December 17, 1971, shall be respected by both sides without prejudice to the recognised position of either side. Neither side shall seek to alter it unilaterally irrespective of mutual differences and legal interpretations. Both sides further undertake to refrain from the threat or the use of force in violation of this line.

(iii) The withdrawals shall commence upon entry into force of this agreement and shall be completed within a period of 30 days thereafter.

(10) This agreement will be subject to ratification by both countries in accordance with their respective Constitutional procedures and will come into force with effect from the date on

which the instruments of ratification are exchanged.

(11) Both Governments agree that their respective heads will meet again at a mutually convenient time in the future and that, in the meanwhile [*sic*] the representatives of the two sides will meet to discuss further the modalities and arrangements for the establishment of durable peace and normalisation of relations, including the questions of repatriation of prisoners of war and civilian internees, a final settlement of Jammu and Kashmir and the resumption of diplomatic relations.

(Indira Gandhi)  
Prime Minister  
Republic of India

(Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto)  
President  
Islamic Republic of Pakistan

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# Index

- Agartala Conspiracy Case (1968), 6, 71, 112
- Ahmed, Aziz, 101
- Ahmed, M.M., 107, 112, 117
- Ahmed, Khondkar Mushtaq, 14, 51, 60
- Ahmed, Muzaffar, 84, 86
- Ahmed, Tajuddin, 5, 10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21, 26, 41, 46, 51, 60, 61, 131, 135, 193, 194, 202, 204
- Akhbar, Said, 92
- Al Badrs, 201, 218
- Al Shamins, 201, 218
- Ali, Chaudhury Mohammad, 87, 101, 108, 110
- Ali, Farman, 164
- Ali, Hussain, 21, 22, 26-29, 100
- Ali, Captain Mansoor, 47, 51, 60
- Ali, Mohammed, 12, 13, 23, 24, 34, 37, 38, 57, 59, 60, 94
- Ali, Rahmat, 12, 13, 18, 19, 39
- Ali, Tariq, 119
- All India Muslim League, 14, 62-64, 78, 79, 201
- All-Party Advisory Committee, meeting, 51
- All Party Muslim Conference, 63
- Amin, Nurul, 39, 66, 67, 79, 83
- Anderson Papers*, 188, 207
- Ansari, Dr 63
- Ansari, Maj-Gen. M.H., 160
- Ansars*, 121, 135
- Anti-India Campaign in Bangladesh, 197, 198, 218
- Arab-Israeli War, lessons from, 150
- Arabian Sea, 147
- Archibald Commission, 102
- Aurora, General Jagjit Singh, 137, 151, 154, 161, 162, 189, 216
- Awami League, 22, 38, 76, 78, 83, 123, 198; birth, 79; formation, 66; Convention at Kagmari, 39, 43, 67, differences, 79, 80; fight against the Communal Constitution, 107, 108; manifesto, 79; Organised a hunger march in Dacca, 109; revival of, 81; secret pact known as "Pancha Sheel" of Congress Awami League Unity, 108; Six-Point Formula, 75, 76, 81, 82, 86, 113; seats secured in 1970 elections, 75; *Azad* and the *Itielaq*, organ of, 199; *People Joi Bangla, Bangla Bani*, weekly organ, 33 Victory in the 1970 election, 1, 2
- Ayoob, Mohammad, 100, 112
- Azad, Abdul Samad, 202
- Azad, Maulana Abul Kalam, 4, 63
- Azum-u-Din, 93
- Baghdad Pact Conference, 110
- Banerjee, D.N.: *Pakistan—A case study in Muslim Politics*, 63
- Bangladesh, demand for Independence, 113, 114; declaration of independence 19; government, formation of, 14, 15; Oath ceremony, 24, and international Press reaction, 17, 19; differe-

- nces among Sheikh and his Cabinet Colleagues on the aid issue 202; rift between Bhasani group and Awami League, 202, 203; Corruption, 196, 197, socialism in, 197; Indian Parliament sympathy for, 140, international opinion, 140; guerrilla war, 121, 123, 131, 132; India's role in, 43, 44, 49, 54; Indian Army's pull out from, 125, 199, 200; India recognises, 29, 30, 60; Indian arms, 10, 11, and the Press, 11; Indian Parliament resolution, 12; International leaders views on, 46, 47; liberation difference between in China and, 39, 40, 41; Press coverage, 45, 46; questions in Indian Parliament about Ceylon permitting the Pakistan Army to fly to, 114; rape of women, 106; reports of Chinese military Press in 52; and Commonwealth, 47; and Britain, 194; and India, 21, 29; and Soviet Union, 147; and USA, 53, 54
- Bangladesh border, smuggling in, 119, 217
- Bay of Bengal, 147, 206
- Bengal, Concept of undivided sovereign, 4, 77
- Bengal Famine of 1943, 102
- Bengal Legislative Assembly, 62
- Bhasani, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan, 1, 2, 4, 30-34, 51, 66, 67, 79, 80, 86, 87, 109-113, 118, 195, 196
- Bhutto, Z.A., 2, 68, 69, 76, 87, 114-117, 209-212, 218
- Biharis, 3
- Border Security Force, 2, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 20, 29, 37, 38, 45, 57, 58, 122, 123, 147, 152, 154, 161
- Border violations, 143, 144
- Bose, Sarat Chandra, 30
- Bose, Professor Satyen, 105
- Bowles, Chester, 96
- Brohi, A.K., 117, 213
- Bunker, Ellsworth, 96
- Bureaucracy, 39, 66-68, 76, 93, 102
- CIA, 54, 94, 96
- Census of 1961, 91
- Chaseworth, Donald, 46
- Chou En-lai, 31, 33
- Chaudhuri, Haq Hamudul, 107
- Choudhury, Major Osman, 9, 13
- Chowdhury, Moinul Haq, 31
- Chowdhury, Subroto Roy, 39
- Churchill, Winston, 92
- Civil disobedience movement in East Pakistan, 77
- Colombo Powers, 109
- Colonialism, 89, 90, 131
- Commonwealth, Bangladesh joins in, 47
- Communism, 34, 95
- Communist Bloc, 95
- Communist Party of Bangladesh, 201, 202
- Communist Party of India, 84, historic resolution of 1942, 85, Election manifesto to 1946, 85
- Communist Party of Pakistan, 83, 85; role of, 77
- Confederation, concept of, 219
- Constitution, 107, 108; of 1962, 91; principles of, 83
- Daulatana, Mian Mumtaz, 67
- Dawn*, the, 91
- de Gaulle, Charles, 92
- Defections of Bangali diplomats and and non-diplomats abroad, 22-24, 47
- Desai, C.C., 195
- Desai, Morarji, 200
- Dewan, Air Marshal, 189
- Dey, Dr S.K., 105
- Dhar, D.P., 43-46, 51, 56
- Dhar, Manoranjan, 51
- DAC formula, 86, 87
- Direct Action Day of the Muslim

- League, 99  
 Dunkirk, 2
- East Pakistan, Communist movement in, 85, 86; Cyclone, 74; economic disparities in, 92, 93; general strike, 119; Language movement (1952), 78, 83; students' role in the Politics of, 83; regional autonomy demand for, 78, 81, 82, 116; peasant movements in, 79, *See also* Bangladesh
- East and West wings, economic disparities, 101-104; cultural differences, 99-101; disparity in the field of social welfare, 104-105, and Education, 105, 106
- East Bengal Rifles (EBR), 5, 16, 17, 36, 82, 118, 121, 123-28, 130-132, 139, 155, 156, 198
- East Pakistan Awami League Council, *See* Awami Muslim League
- East Pakistan Civil Armed Forces (EPCE), 141
- East Pakistan Rifles, 6, 17, 20, 36, 82, 121-125, 130, 131, 139, 156
- East Pakistan students' union, aligned with the Muslim League, 82
- Eberharther, Herman P., 54
- Edbi, Halide, 63
- Elections, 1; of 1954, 78, 84; of 1970, 74, 75, 113, 114
- Ellis, Sir Thomas, 103
- Faruqe, Ghulam, 107
- Five Year Plan, 92
- Franchise, universal, adult, 78, 81
- FF (freedom fighters), 55, 59
- Galbraith, J.K., 96
- Gana Bahini*, 137
- Gandhi, Indira, 43-45, 49, 50, 52, 57, 111, 138-140, 143, 145, 151, 194, 199, 220, 204-206, 112-115, 219, 221
- Gandhi Mahatma, 98
- Gauhar, Altaf, 101
- Geneva Convention, 128
- Gill, Maj-Gen. G.S., 157
- Gono Bahini*, 38
- Great Calcutta Killings (1946), 99
- Guerrilla war, aspect of, 113-134; advantages of, 131, 132; objectives of, 133; training of, 125-127, Value of Sabotage in, 132-135
- Guerrillas, defined, 121, 128, 129; directives, 130, 131
- Guevara, Che, 128, 132
- Haq, Amjadul, 23, 24
- Haq, A.K. Fazlul, 30, 62, 64, 66, 70, 75, 89, 107, 108
- Haq, Shamsul, 79
- Hart, Liddell, 154
- Hassan, Fida, 101
- Hazelhurst, Peter, 45, 46
- Hijacking issue, 9, 139
- Hussain, Arshad, 101
- Hussain, Muzaffar, 51
- Hussain, Zahid, 98
- Ikram, S.M: *Modern Muslim Islam and Birth of Pakistan*, 63
- India, Defence budget, 146-148, 152, External Affairs, Ministry of, 152
- Indian Air Force, role of, 164, 165; subject of Controversy during the 1962 and 1965 war, 165; superiority, 166, 181
- Indian Army, 29, 35, 58, 189-192; attitude of the Muslim Leaders towards, 65, 66; defence strategy in the Eastern sector, 161-163; pull out from the Bangladesh, 125, 199, 200, farewell ceremony, 216; role, 142
- Indian Corps for Bangladesh, Organisation of, 157, 158, 161
- Indian Independence Act, 117
- Indian Navy Task Force, role of, 149, 166-169; strength, 167
- Indian outpost (Assam-Meghalaya).

- Pakistan's first attack on, 57, 58  
 Indo-Bangladesh relations, 21, 29, 30, 47, 194-228; Treaty of Friendship, 209  
 Indo-Pak war (1965), 81, 95; lessons from, 146, 147  
 Indo-Pak war (1971), pre-emptive air strike, 97, 150-155; Pakistan's failure, 150, 151; India's reply, 151; factors for initiative, 146-153; India's counter-air-attack, 155; contingency plan, 151, 152; casualties, 145, 146, 163, 164, 190-192, 211; Mrs Gandhi's broadcast to the nation, 178; state of Emergency, 51; in the Western sector, 145, 146, 153, 154, 157, 158, 180-92, India's political aim, 154-155, number of Indian forces in, 155-156; in the Western sector, 141-144; role of China, 143; Western Press propaganda, 95  
 Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and cooperation, 50, 51, 104, 208, 209  
 Indo-US relations, 94, 95, 96, 97  
 Infiltration, 127, 131  
*INS Vikrant*, 168  
 Iqbal, Mohammad, 63, 64  
 Islam, Amirul, 12, 60  
 Islam, Syed Nazrul, 15, 26, 60  
 "Islamic Socialism," 87  
 Jacob, Maj-Gen. J.F.R., 189  
 Jagjivan Ram, 205  
 Jamat-i-Islami, 10, 86, 87, 201  
 Jameson, Dr, 122  
 Jinnah, Miss Fatima, 81  
 Jinnah, Mohammed Ali, 61-66, 89, 90, 92, 98  
 Kamal, Mrs Shofia, Bangladesh poet, 106  
 Kumaruzzaman, A.H., 15, 47, 51, 59, 60  
 Kashmir, Bhutto's voice for self-determination, 219  
 Keating, Kenneth, 13, 96  
 Kennedy, Edward, 46  
*Khaiber*, 168  
 Khan, Abdul Hamid, 112  
 Khan, General Akbar, 84  
 Khan, Ayub, 67, 68, 70, 71, 76, 81, 82, 86, 87, 94, 102, 138  
 Khan, Liaquat Ali, 66, 79, 84, 90-94  
 Khan, Begum Liaquat Ali, 93  
 Khan, Brigadier Malik Hayat, 60, 145  
 Khan, Maj-Gen. Mohammad Jamshed, 160  
 Khan, Maulvi Tamizuddin, 93  
 Khan, Mohammad Aslam, 64  
 Khan, General Tikka, 56, 112, 115, 119, 120  
 Khan, General Umrao, 69  
 Khan, Wali, 71  
 Khan, Yahya, General, 13, 70-77, 81, 83, 86, 107, 112-115, 125, 119, 120, 141, 151, 155, 191-194, 209, 210  
 Khilafat movement, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67  
 Kissinger, Dr Henry, 98  
 Kosygin, A., 31  
 Krishak Proja Party, 64  
 Krishak Shramik Party, formation of, 79  
*Kukri*, 168, 169  
 Lahore Resolution on Pakistan, 4, 5, 77, 113  
 Legal Framework Order, 82, 83  
 Liberation Army Command, 130  
 Lin Piao, 129  
 Lushak, David : *Pakistan Crisis*, 114  
 Maitra, S.N., 112  
 Manekshaw, S.H.F.J., 86, 87, 114, 151  
 Mao Tse-tung, 31, 33, 121, 128  
 Mascarenhas, Anthony, 3, 117



- Maudoodi, 86, 87  
*Mein Kampf* by Hitler, 138  
 Minto, Lord, 62  
 Mirza, Iskander, Major-General, 67-69, 76, 94, 101, 109, 110, 192  
 Mohammad, Ghulam, 66, 67, 68, 94, 100  
 Mohammad Ali of Bogra, 67, 93  
*Mujib Bahini*, 38  
 Mujibur Rahman, Sheikh, 2, 3, 9-12, 18, 35, 71-73, 79-83, 87, 90, 108-115, 129, 133, 156, 196; Six-Point Formula, 75, 76; demand for his release, 193, 194, 210-213, Yahya talks, 77, 78, 81, 82, 116, 117  
 Mukherji, S.P., 30  
*Mukti Bahini*, 29, 38, 45, 54, 57, 125-29, 134-136, 140, 144, 145, 148, 152, 153, 163, 164, 169, 174, 178, 181-85, 191, 196, 198, 200, 207; Change in the composition, 36; role of, 46, 155; strength of, 156  
*Mukti Fauz* (Bangladesh Army), formation of, 135, 136  
 Nagra, General Gandharva, 186, 189  
 Nassar, Sheikh Abu, 30, 35  
 National Assembly, 75, 77, 82, 83, 91, 114-116, 174  
 National Awami Party (NAP) (Wali-Muzaffar) 38, 39, 44, 201; formation of, 109; Bhasanis' resignation, 80; ideology, 87, students group, 82, 83  
 National Coalition Government, 32, 39, 49, 51  
 Nawab Vaqar-ul-Mulk, 62  
 Nazimuddin, Khawaza, 66, 93  
 Nazimuddin Cabinet, dismissal of, 67  
 Nehru, Jawaharlal, 33, 98  
 Nehru-Liaquat Pact, 223  
 Nehru-Noon Agreement, 220  
 Nehru Report, 63  
*Newsweek*, 125  
 Niazi, A.A.K., 141, 155, 156, 161-163, 185-87  
 Nixon, Richard, 31, 182-87, 208  
 One man, one vote, 91  
 Osmani, Colonel M.A.G., 20, 21, 36, 37, 45, 46, 54, 198, 199  
 Pakistan, birth of, 66; Concept of, 63; Advisory Panel for the Fourth Five Year Plan, report 101; Corruption in, 102, 103; defence budget, 104; distinction between the rich West Pakistan and the peasant East Pakistan, 78; foreign policy of, 109; general strike, 87; idea of a religious crusade (Jehad), 65; "Islamic constitution" of, 107; "The Great October Revolution", 70; militarism in, 67-75; military coup in, 81; political parties' role, 77, 78; power structure in the post Ayub period, 112-120; member of CENTO and SEATO, 67, 94, 109, Security Pact with the United States, 68, 93, 94; Third Five Year Plan, 102, Chinese military aid to 95-98; and Soviet Economic aid to, 98; and USA, 109, economic aid, 94, military aid, 93-96, 140  
 Pakistan Air Force, 18, 164; total Aircraft, 165-166; strength of, 52; lose, 168; surrender in the Eastern Sector, 179  
 Pakistan Army, 5-7, 9-15, 20, 21, 35, 36, 55, 58, 122, 123, 127, 128-136; attitude during the post election period, 3; strength of, 16, 52; drawbacks, 170; loss 162  
 Pakistan Corps, organisation of, 157-61  
 Pakistan Students' Union, 82  
 Palit, D.K.; *The Lightning Campaign*, 166, 188

- Pan-Islamism, 89  
 Panch Sheel, 216, 220  
 Parliamentary system, introduction of, 81, 82  
 People's Party, 69  
 Pirzada, S.G.M.M., 112, 113  
*PNS Ghazi*, 167  
 POWs, 210, 212, 219  
 Presidential elections, 81  
  
 Rahman, Major Ziaur, 9, 80  
 Raina, T.N., 157, 160, 161, 179, 180, 186  
 Rashiduzzaman, M., 80  
 Rawalpindi Conspiracy case of 1953, 84, 112, *See also* Agartala conspiracy case  
 Refugees, 13, 34, 35, 38, 41, 42, 57, 78, 96, 139, 205  
 Riots, 78, 85, 86, 116  
 Rogers, William, 187  
 Roosevelt, Franklin D., 92  
 Round Table Conference, 62, 63  
  
 Sagat Singh, 157, 160, 161, 183, 184  
 Samad, Abdus, 61  
 Sarkar, Abu Hussain, 103  
 Sengupta, Joyoti, 84, 110  
 Seventh Fleet, U.S., 188, 207  
*Shahjeham*, 168  
  
 Shaw, George Bernard, 71  
 Shoaib, Mohammad, 101  
 Shore, Peter, 46  
 Simla Summit, 219-221  
 Sino-Indian war (1962), 146, 147, 165, 208  
 Sobhan, Rehman, 115, 117  
 Stassen, Harold, 94  
 Stalin, Joseph, 92  
 Stonehouse, John, 46  
 Students' Action Committee (SAC), Eleven-point programme, 82, 87  
 Suhrawardy, H.S., 4, 30, 66-68, 80, 90, 98, 103, 109  
  
 Tashkent Agreement, 98, 169  
 Teheran Conference of 1943, 92  
 Thapan, Lt-Gen. M.N., 157, 160, 161  
 Thant, U., 31  
*Tripoli*, 188  
  
*Washington Post* the, 94, 96  
 Wilson, Harold, 169  
  
 Yalta Conference of 1944, 92  
  
 Zhadanov line of the International Communist movement, 84, 85